

## THE SERMONS OF EDWARD HITCHCOCK

**1819 – 1862**

Transcriptions of the original hand-written  
manuscripts in the collections of the  
Amherst College Archives and Special Collections,  
Amherst, Massachusetts

Transcribed by  
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2017-2020

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### [Introduction](#)

Edward Hitchcock (1793-1864) is best known as a geologist and paleontologist who taught at Amherst College from 1826 to 1863 and served as the third president of the college from 1845 to 1854. But Hitchcock was also a minister who preached in churches throughout New England for over thirty-five years. Although his scientific works have enjoyed considerable attention from historians, his sermons have been largely forgotten.

Hitchcock's life embodied many contradictions. He was a Calvinist who believed that the Holy Scriptures were the word of God, yet he pursued scientific truth wherever it led. He implored his parishioners to devote their lives to God and to eschew the riches, honors, and pleasures of the world, yet he found himself constantly in the thrall of those very temptations. In an age when many preachers refused to apply their faith to the great moral issues of their day, Hitchcock spoke out against intemperance, war, slavery, and the mistreatment of the American Indian.

In 2017 I began studying the life and works of Edward Hitchcock with the goal of writing a biography. One of my first efforts was to read his sermons. Thanks to the Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, I was able to access the nearly 200 sermons in their collection remotely. Over a period of many months I transcribed them all. I used voice-to-text software to dictate each sermon into a document file, then reread the sermon, comparing the transcription to images of the originals.

This digital document contains my transcriptions of all the sermons of Edward Hitchcock in the Amherst College Archives as well as thirteen published sermons. It does not include the thirty-nine sermons in

the collections of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Deerfield, Massachusetts, nor does it include any of the many sermon fragments and notes in the Amherst College Archives.

Most of Hitchcock's hand-written sermons have a title and a sermon number written in Hitchcock's hand on the cover page. But a number of his sermons are un-numbered and/or untitled. For those sermons I have assigned a number (starting with 500) and have chosen an appropriate title. Where sermon numbers or titles are not Hitchcock's own, I have placed them in brackets. Just below the sermon number and title of each sermon I have inserted the location information including box number and folder number as they appear in the finding aids of the Archives. This will help the reader who wishes to locate the original in the Archives. To locate the digital images for a sermon, it is only necessary to go to [acdc.amherst.edu](http://acdc.amherst.edu) and enter either the sermon number (e.g., "Sermon 38"), the title (e.g., "Submission to God"), or the scriptural reference (e.g., "Job 27") in the search box. The numbers and titles I have assigned will not work as search terms; for those sermons you will need to use some other search term.

Besides the nearly 200 hand-written sermons from the Archives, I have also included thirteen of Hitchcock's published sermons. For most of these I have provided a link to the digitized version available from Google Books. Two of Hitchcock's published sermons, "Weep Not for Me" (Sermon 536) and "The Fully Ripe Grain Gathered In" (Sermon 548), have not to my knowledge been digitized. The transcriptions of those were made directly from print copies.

Most of Hitchcock's sermons begin with a verse of scripture that he selected for the sermon and inserted on the cover page below the title. Hitchcock used the King James Version exclusively. If a scriptural reference was incomplete or difficult to read, I inserted the King James version of the verse. The same is true of the many scriptural passages that appear in the text of nearly every sermon.

Throughout the transcriptions, I show quoted material in italics. For poetry or other extended quotations, I have indicated the source in brackets whenever possible.

Also appearing on the cover page of most of Hitchcock's sermons is a list of the churches where he delivered the sermon and the date of each delivery. As these were added long after the sermon was written, they are often scrawled in the margins or between lines of text. I have transcribed this information on the last page of each sermon. Hitchcock was pastor of only one community church, the Congregational church in Conway, Massachusetts, from 1821-1825. But he was called on regularly to provide "pulpit supply" for churches up and down the Connecticut Valley and sometimes beyond. He also served for a time as pastor of the chapel at Amherst College. He often reused his old sermons, but it is clear from the manuscripts that he did a good deal of revision. Sometimes he rearranged the original, added or deleted sections.

Also on the cover page of many sermons is a list of hymns and readings selected by Hitchcock for that service. These were often made in pencil; some are barely legible. For that reason I have not attempted to transcribe them.

Although Hitchcock's handwriting is generally legible, there are many instances in which I was unable to read a word or phrase. There are also occasional instances in which a tear or ink smear obscures the text. In those cases I have inserted four question marks in brackets [????] in place of the unreadable text.

Many variations in spelling have been preserved in the transcription. Some of these may have been Hitchcock's own, others were customary for his time. Examples include *eccentrick*, *independant*, *volcanoe*, *risque*, and *favour*. Hitchcock was frugal in all things, including the use of punctuation. I have sometimes added commas or replaced colons with semicolons or periods to make the meaning clearer.

Many of the sermons include pages inserted after the original was complete; some have alternate endings; several have multiple versions of the entire sermon. Whenever possible I have pointed out these variations or provided special instructions in brackets for the reader.

I have tried my best to make this transcription as accurate as possible. I apologize in advance for any errors and welcome corrections from readers. In time I may append an errata sheet or produce a revised version of the entire document.

At the beginning of many of the transcriptions I have added a few comments on the content or the context of the sermon. I have placed these inside brackets so the reader will know that they are the transcriber's comments.

The 200 sermons contain some 845,000 words. Reading and transcribing them has been an interesting and very rewarding process. At times the work was slow and frustrating, particularly when the voice-to-text software was glitchy, or the quality of the original was less than perfect. At those times I had only to imagine Reverend Hitchcock laboring away two centuries ago, quill pen in hand, suffering from poor eyesight, and with only a flickering candle to light the page, composing, writing, revising, and copying all those sermons. My labors by comparison seem small.

I am indebted to Amherst College and the Archives, and particularly to Margaret Dakin and Michael Kelly of the Archives, for preserving the sermons of Edward Hitchcock and making them accessible to all. If you make use of this transcription, please be sure to cite your source including, of course, the Amherst College Archives and Special Collections.

Readers wanting to learn more about Edward Hitchcock sermons may wish to read my biography, *All the Light Here Comes from Above: the Life and Legacy of Edward Hitchcock*, or my article, "Lord Is It I? The Sermons of Edward Hitchcock," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 48 (Summer, 2020): 94-123. Perhaps the book, article, and this transcription will inspire others to get to know the man behind that quill pen.

Sincerely,

Robert T. McMaster  
September 24, 2020

## Sermon 4 Death

[Sermon No. 4, "Death," Ecclesiastes 8:8, 1820 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 1]

Ecclesiastes 8:8

*There is no discharge in that war.*

*[Four or five additional paragraphs are included that may have been written on the occasion of the deaths of parishioners. Also an obituary written by Hitchcock for his sister, Emelia Billings.]*

The soldier who has long been engaged in the service of his country looks forward with a joyful hope to the hour when he shall be released from the dangerous toils and return once more to repose in the arms of peace and friendship. And to such an one, this hour, so sweet and delightful, has sometimes arrived. He has escaped unhurt from the perils of war and is permitted to spend the residue of his days without any to molest or make him afraid. But there is a war, in which every child of Adam is engaged, from which there is no discharge. It is the war with death; and no effort of human power - no skill in deception, has ever secured the breast of an individual from the arrows of this Thing of Terrors. This march is confirmed to no country and to no generation - and of all our fallen race, only two, favored of heaven, have escaped the fury of his vindictive arm.

The great truth that all must die is, however, denied by no man. The universal testimony of all ages and countries leaves no room for the faintest doubt in the most skeptical mind. And the object in choosing this text, is not to give a logical proof of the certainty of death, but to bring the subject to bear upon our hearts. For stranger as it might seem to an angel, it is a melancholy fact, that though death is before our eyes almost daily, and though eternal consequences are suspended upon the little uncertain period that remains to us, we live as if we were immortal, and feeble, very feeble, to the influence of this great truth upon our lives. Permit me then to hold up to your view a few of the most striking instances of the triumphs of death: 1. One as exhibited in the history of mankind, and 2. As made known to us by our own experience.

### 1. As exhibited in the history of mankind

The Instances of mortality in our species are most numerous in infancy. More than one half of mankind are cut down before they attained to the age of twelve. Yet this so rapid havoc of life, does not affect us so deeply as the rarer cases where man is taken in the vigor of youth, or in manhood. For these little ones have not yet unfolded their peculiar excellences of character, nor have they become united to so many hearts by the ties of affection and esteem. They are yet only unfolding their blossoms - and though we may be pleased with the beauty of these flowers, yet their loss is not so sensibly felt as if they had begun to cast fruit around them. Still, however, let it not be thought that there are none who feel, deeply feel, that stroke which removes their little ones from the land of the living. Look at those parents who have been called to witness the last struggles of a beloved infant. They saw this child a few

days before in all the sportive loveliness of innocence – yet exhibiting no marks of a corrupted nature, and yet untarnished by an evil world. That smile of peace, of innocence and happiness, is now exchanged for the paleness of death; and the fond parent sees so rich and so dear a treasure, torn from him forever.

But though the victims of death be most numerous in infancy, his ravages are by no means small among those of maturer years. Witness that youth, just ready to take his place as an active member of society, with a mind well disciplined and stored with knowledge - the idol, expectation and the only child of his parents, and to whom many eyes are turned, as to one bidding fair for usefulness and eminence. Today you see him surrounded by friends and affluence, full of literary hope, and flushed with the ardor of youth and of health - tomorrow he is stretched nerveless and pale upon the bed of sickness, and the third day, he is numbered with the dead. I have said that this youth was the idol of his parents – Yes, and they were Christians, therefore they might worship God only: this then must be taken away, or they would never return from their wanderings. *And God, to save the parents, took the son.*

Take now another instance not infrequently to be met with in the world. This man seems to be devoted from his birth ~~as a victim~~ to the severest miseries of life and the protracted pains of death. Born in obscurity and with a feeble constitution, he is forced to contend with poverty, disease, and an unfeeling world, as long as he lives. He cannot resist this united torrent, but every day is to him a day of pain and adversity. From months and years he perceives the slow but certain approach of the Thing of Terrors, menacing him with the uplifted arm. He struggles, indeed to be discharged from this contest with him who is always conquer - but prayers and tears and the physicians aid are of no avail. Yet he struggles thus, from the weakness of nature, and not because he is unwilling to submit to the will of God. For his long series of afflictions have led him to resort to the great Physician of souls who has freed him from the malady of sin - and he feels a strong hope that though death may gain a momentary conquer conquest over his body he shall ultimately be more than conqueror.

Yes, this man dies a Christian and will hereafter have occasion to rejoice and bless God, for all his pains and sorrows in the flesh: for these have wrought out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But not so with the next picture I would exhibit. This man has been nourished in affluence and blessed with health and prosperity. But pride, fulness of bread and abundance of wellness, the sins and the ruin of Sodom, were his destruction. In an unexpected hour he is called to prepare to meet his God. But who can hope to perform this great work amid the anxiety, distress and deliverance of a raging and rapid disease? Yet this man must die - for death, un pitying remorseless death, will not grant him even one short day for making his peace with God. One sudden stroke of disease has swept away all his brilliant hopes of earthly pleasures, and disclosed to his view an opening grave once a cheerless world beyond it. He must die – in the morning of life, he must die – with no Saviour to conduct him through the dark valley, and with no God, whom in the spirit of faith, he can call Abba, Father.

Take another instance of the unsparing and undistinguishing nature of death, in the fate of the tender and delicate woman - which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness. Elated by the intentions and flatteries that wait on female beauty she had never humbled her thoughts to contemplate that house appointed for all living. To use the expressive language of the Prophet, she had said in her health, *I shall be a lady forever*. But the hand of death has withered in a moment all these presumptive expectations. At his appeal the expression of sentiment and feeling in the eye, has vanished- the rose of beauty withered on the cheek, and we now turn away with disgust from that countenance, once once animated with every charm. [Asterisk]

But may not the man who is in the midst of usefulness - who fulfills the high stations in the government of his country - in the courts of justice - in the seminaries of learning - or who faithfully ministers at the altar ministers at the altar, may not such an one be exempt from the capricious assaults of death, and spared a little grace to bless the community? Oh, there is no discharge in that war! The demands of death are as unchanging and impartial as that God who commissions it. And when this angel of the Divine Justice declares to an individual, time shall be no longer, whatever be the station in life, however useful, however beloved, that man has nothing to do but to prepare for death. I will take one instance out of the many that are furnished in the history of the world. This man is in a station which nothing but distinguished talents, and exalted virtue can fill. To the ignorant he is an oracle, and to the miserable a father; and he exerts a happy and a virtuous influence over thousands. He is besides in the noon of life and promises to be long a burning and a shining light in the world. But God, in whom we live and move, orders otherwise - and he is taken from all this usefulness almost without a warning.

Still more mysterious and affecting, is the case of that faithful and devoted missionary of the cross, who, after years of toil and hardship, has at length succeeded in establishing himself in some land of savage error, crime and superstition, and just begins to see his instructions taking root, yet is called from his labors by Him whose ways are not as our ways. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!

These, my brethren, are only a few instances of the mortality of our species. They are selected from the great congregation that yearly and daily, in this dying world, crowd the passage to the tomb, to impress us with the truth, that no age or condition can indulge a momentary hope, that they are not alike exposed every hour, to the universal lot. Still, these select cases may not sensibly affect our hearts; for though they might have reached our ears, yet perhaps we were not bound to these victims of death by ties of kindred, or affection, and therefore, feel no individual bereavement. Let us then, in the second place, endeavor to bring the subject nearer home, by addressing our own experience to the great fact contained in the text, that there is no discharge in the war of death.

And in the first place, who among us does not sometimes feel in his own infirmities the reality of that sentence, stamp with a pen of iron upon every son of Adam, dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return? When we feel the aching head, the feverish pulse, or the acute pain, how soon does our vigor languish in our spirits droop! Perhaps some of us have felt, for months and years, the secret workings of some inveterate disease, slowly but irresistibly undermining the constitution, weakening the vigor of body and mind, and gradually conducting us to the tomb! Oh, we cannot, then, but realize, that our time is short and that nature must soon yield in a conflict so unequal. Perhaps some of us in the course of life have been confined to the chamber of sickness - have been full of tossings to and fro in the night season - and of distress from morning to evening. Did we not then forcibly realize that our earthly tabernacle was dissolving, when the brain was half delirious, the pulse fluttering, the eye sunk and languid, the arm nerveless and the whole frame helpless as in infancy? At such times we can scarcely avoid the conviction that we are mortal and happy would it be for us did not returning health destroy these impressions.

But perhaps, my brethren, I can make a more powerful appeal to your experience. For who of us has not been called to follow a father, or a mother, or a wife, or a husband, or a child, or a brother, or sister, or a friend, to the grave?

Was it a father? You saw him to whom under God you were indebted for existence, who has devoted you in baptism to the Lord, instructed you in religion and human learning - daily provided for your wants, and who has morning and evening, committed you in prayer to the keeping of Almighty God -

this father, so dear to you, you saw sinking under the weight of an incurable disease. You heard his dying counsel, and when nature could no longer maintain her conflict, you saw his last struggle and felt the tender ties of affection sundered forever. Oh, then how empty did the world appear to you, and how strong were the impressions of your heart that you also must die!

Was it a mother? No less trying was the struggle of feeling, and no less deep the impressions on your heart. For you then called to remembrance her numerous pains, anxieties and watchings on your account - how she nursed you in the years of infancy - how she wept in all your sorrows and rejoiced in all your joys, and how she loved you, with a mother's love, even unto death.

Was it a wife or husband? Oh I would not attempt to recall all those overwhelming emotions but then rushed on your souls. I know that when you saw the grave close over the remains of one who was bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, and saw yourself left alone in this barren world, then you not only realized the certainty of your own dissolution, but you scarcely wished that it might be delayed.

Was it a child? As you stood over its sickbed, how frequent and how ardent were your prayers for its recovery! How unremitted were your exertions to revisit the workings of that disease, which had fastened upon its frame with a grasp you could not uncloset! How often did you even wish that you might be taken and the child spared! And when you found all the prayers and all the exertions in vain, how forcefully did you realize the impotency of human struggles in resisting the progress of death!

Was it a brother or a sister? Then, there, you felt the very nerve of affection broken. You were called to witness the last agonies of the companion of your cradle, and of your childish sports, who, a few days before, was as healthy and vigorous as yourself. All the innocent amusements of a happy childhood enjoyed with one so linked to you by nature, and all the thousand nameless expressions of affection you have ever experienced from a brother's or a sister's love, crowd upon your mind as you stand by the deathbed of that brother or that sister, and feel the sinking pulse, and see the convulsive struggle and the fixed eye - the signals of the victory of death. Do you at such a moment feel as if you were in no degree exposed to a similar end? Do you then feel a confidence to build your hopes on any earthly foundation?

And lastly was it a friend? There is a friend, says Solomon, that sticketh closer than a brother - and loveth at all times. Such an one may have been ours. In him we have found a defender and a patron. Into his bosom we have poured our griefs and found his sympathy a balm for every wound. Yet he is now taken from us - and we have seen the grave close over all that was mortal of one so dear to us. That eye, which welcomed us by its expression, will never more be unclosed - that heart which glowed with affection and virtue, is cold in the tomb, and that tongue which so often animated us in the cause of religion is dumb forever!

Thus, my brethren, do we learn from our own experience in that of others, the frailty of man and the universality of the dominion of death, over our apostate world. I trust that our hearts are now prepared for the application -

And first, this subject shows us how hateful and ruinous is Sin. For by one man sin entered into the world and death by Sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Then we see the true source of the desolation and ruin of our species. The fountain was corrupted with the power of poison of sin. We have drunk deeply at this fountain and must therefore, die. These natures, originally from heaven and bearing the image of the Holy God, we have defaced and brutalized, and death alone

can free us from these pollutions.

And has sin a power so deadly as to bring all this ruin upon one of the noble objects of creation, an immortal mind? *No wonder*, Joel hath said, *Oh, do*. (No wonder that he who is over all God blessed forever must become incarnate and die on the cross ere man could be pardoned) not this abominable thing that I hate. No wonder that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and no wonder that the smoke of the torments of the finally impenitent ascendeth up forever and ever.

In the second place, do the instances of death around us and the certainty of its approach stimulate us to prepare for our own exit? We have been seeing that the world is but one broad field of battle, where nearly one-hundred-fifty generations of men have fought and fallen by the unsparing sword of the great destroyer. On this same field we now stand, and are engaged in this same war. We tread upon the graves of a world and daily behold our comrades falling on our right hand and on our left. Yet many of us close our eyes to all this danger and heedlessly riot in sin, standing as it were in the very jaws of destruction.

The man who treads carelessly on the margin of a volcano will often feel the thin and deceptive covering of ashes give way in an instant under his feet and he will sink into the fiery furnace beneath. So every sinner – every man who does not habitually keep his end in view and examine on what ground he rests, is treading over a lake of living fire and will soon be buried in it forever.

My brethren what are our reflections when we follow a friend to the tomb? I know they are full of tenderness: but unless they are also religious they amount to nothing. If such an event does not awaken us from stupidity and sin we shall not be awakened by anything.

*Smitten friends are angels sent on errands full of love -  
For us they languish and for us they die.*

And what are our reflections when we visit the graves of our friends? Does that spot, made sacred by their ashes, teach us no lesson? You say that all is motionless and dead at the tomb, and that no sound is there heard, save the wind, sighing over the remains? Oh, how can you be deaf to that voice which rises from their ashes, loud as thunder and perpetually repeats the admonition, *be ye also ready!* Yes, there we should often resort to learn wisdom: for it is the school of wisdom. There should we often kneel alone and pray - for prayer in such a spot cannot be formal - cannot be insincere. There should we learn habitually to contemplate with an eye that will not be diverted, that grave which is already opening for ourselves. Nor should our view terminate at the tomb - we should look into the world beyond it. Oh who could resist the convictions of such a spot and such an hour!

If death were an uncommon event, if but an individual of our race were destroyed during several years, it would most forcibly arrest our attention. And then there would be no occasion for monuments and sermons to awaken remembrance and bring home a lesson to the heart. But if such an every day occurrence that we regard it with almost as much indifference as the rising and setting of the sun. Were you standing upon a field of battle and saw the sword of your enemy raise over your head and your comrades fallen by your side, would there be any need of reminding you of your danger? Yet this is indeed precisely our case my brethren. Every day thousands around us are smitten by the iron of the great destroyer. One of our comrades in the field of the world falls every second - so that while I now



speaking one was fallen and now another - and now another - and now another - and now another. Oh, let us be persuaded to look up and see if the next blow is not aimed at us! At the longest it must soon fall, and it may be the sentence against us is already gone forth. Yet notwithstanding all this danger if we are not careful we shall forget it amidst the uproar of the world. Let us then resolve that before we sleep this night we will spend one quarter of an hour in reflecting upon death. Let us set before our eyes our own exit and see the circumstances attending it. The pains of this disease, weeping of friends - the final separation with those we love - the solemn procession following us to the tomb and the last look of friendship upon us as the grave closes over our remains.

And there is one question important beyond all others which we must not fail putting to ourselves most seriously during this moment of reflection. It is a question which decision may for our everlasting destiny - a question which must be decided in this world or another - a question in which are suspended the joys of heaven or the miseries of hell and which if we do not decide will be decided by God - Let us then in the stillness and solemnity of the Lord this day enquire individually - Am I prepared to die!

And there is one declaration of scripture that may prove to us a profitable text during such a season of reflection - It is a declaration which every day's experience urges upon our attention - a declaration which the late alarm providences among us should bring home to our hearts with a powerful emphasis - a declaration which if we neglect it during our lives will haunt us upon our death beds and fill us with despair at the day of judgment - O let it strike deep into every heart- prepare to meet thy God! Prepare to meet thy God!

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*[This appears to be the end of the original sermon. Several additional pages are included that may represent alternate endings written at later times for specific members of the congregation who passed away.]*

We are summoned to attend at the close of this service the funeral of one whom all so far as I know regarded as a humble and devoted Christian whose meat and drink it was to do the will of God. I feel therefore that it may be a profitable meditation to suppose he addressing us from her dying bed in the language of the text. In trying to receive the instruction which such a scene should impart I shall attempt to describe the contrast between the dying believer and surviving friends.

We may first look at the contrast between the dying Christian and the dying incarnate sinner.

#### Spiritual Communion

1

*Overwhelmed with life's distracting cares,  
By vanity and sin oppressive,  
I sigh for one sweet hour with God,  
When my worn spirit may find rest.*

2

*I pant for God! And lo he's here!  
What glories burst upon my views*

*The glories of the eternal God  
And yet my God and father too.*

3

*With equal glory shines the lamb  
And as I care I feel his love  
The God man savior brother friend,  
My noblest thoughts and passion move.*

4

*Spirit divine, blest comforter!  
I feel too thy constraining power,  
Depressing light through all my nose  
How peace and joy in this glad horn*

5

*And see what countless angel bands  
The door before Jehovah's throne  
With spirits of the just from Earth  
Bright witnesses to cheer me on.*

6

*Sure this is Zion's heavenly mount,  
the city of my God. Here let me stay,  
Till my heart glows with holy love,  
and I can bear song away.*

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And sometimes have we seen the woman who for years has been struggling with sorrows and disease – yield at length to the united pressure and sinking beneath the sword of death. We have seen but an one in the midst of these calamities and distresses manifesting the most heroic and unwavering faith – gradually gradually refining in the furnace of affliction - blessing God that her trials were fewer than her deservings - and weaned at last from all mortal attachments - we have seen her welcome the approaching moment when her weary spirit should be freed from the shackles of mortality and ascend beyond the reach of sorrow disease and death - into the presence of the God where is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. And as the prophet of old gazed upon his master carried up in a fiery chariot to heaven so may we profitably watch the death bed of this Christian woman and as the mantle of Elijah fell upon Elisha so would to God her faith and submission and triumph in her redeemer might fall upon us.

[Asterisk] On the other hand we can sometimes have the gratification of beholding a female, who in the morn of her days is called into eternity, meeting the Thing of Terror with smile and committing her soul to Christ in all the triumph of an unwavering faith. Though young in years she is old in religion. While others were devoting their time to the reading of romances and visionary records, she was reading the

Bible. While others were employed in adorning their persons – at the card table or in the dancing assembly or in other fashionable vanities she was praying to God. And now in this trying hour does she find him an unfailing friend. We mourn indeed that so bright an example of piety should be taken away this early from the earth where it is so much wanted but we rejoice that the soul has gone to a better world and that we are permitted to behold it as if it were translated into heaven. In this world it shone like a star struggling behind the fogs and the clouds and we saw but half its beauty and splendor: But hereafter will it move through the pure hemisphere of heaven an unclouded and everlasting sun.  
[Asterisk]

There is another instance evincing the truth of our text which few of us have not observed. And it is when the grasp of death is fixed upon one who has been struggling for years to establish himself in an independent and respectable station in society and who is just on the point of attaining his object. For years has he labored with persevering industry and brought into requisition every faculty of body and mind to reach this point of fancier happiness. Already has he acquired houses and lands and friends and honors. And he now fondly imagines that he is about to rest from his cares and toils and in his future enjoyments to find ample reward for all his past labors. The whole prospect before him is bright and beautiful and cloudless as any prospect can be in this world and many an envious eye is turned secretly upon him because so much happiness is before him. But alas there is an arrow of death coming upon the gale – and it smites him as he is entering the threshold of happiness, perhaps in the midst of the marriage feast - as the house of feasting is turned into the house of mourning.[Asterisk]

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Delivered

At Amherst March 15 1819 [?]

At Yale October 1819 [?]

At Brattleboro West Parish June 25 1820

At Chickopee (Springfield) August 1820

At Deerfield N. Parish December 1820

At Sunderland April 1821

At Conway December 1821

*[Inserted in the document is an obituary written by Edward Hitchcock for his sister Emelia, dated October 2, 1854.]*

#### *A SISTER'S DEATH-BED*

I was lately summoned away to see a sister die. I reached her home among the hills at a still and early hour of a summer evening, and was told to hasten to her bed-side, if perchance she might recognize me. I perceived, indeed, that the king of terrors was sure of his victim: for the pallor and ghastliness of death was upon her features! Yet nature still struggled manfully with disease, and reason maintained her throne: nor was the power of utterance gone. Therefore I had the consolation of hearing her reply to my enquiry, whether in her extremity she could hope and trust the Saviour? "Oh, yes, I do." – What then shall I pray for? "Pray that I may know that my hope is well founded," was the reply.

At her request we then left her for a time. But at midnight we were again summoned to see death's final triumph. O how few scenes on earth are more solemn, or more truly sublime, than to witness the departure of a Christian at the dark and still hour of midnight; to see the last ebbings of the life of a beloved friend; to have the stillness broken only by the struggling and yielding breath, the sighs of surrounding friends, or the voice of prayer; and to realize that a redeemed soul is breaking loose from its earthly bonds and just ready to take its immortal crown. But how did it deepen d still more the interest of the scene in the present case, to find that even to the last, I was recognized, and to have a prompt affirmative reply to the questions, "Is Christ precious still?"

And here a little incident impressed me deeply. That sister was a mother. Two sons, her only children, had grown up to manhood and respectability, and were present. But they were out of her sight. She made an effort to speak. She asked for her sons. They came and were recognized. But she gave them no special message. It seemed to be the last earthly feeling of a mother's heart – a holy feeling and not unworthy a dying hour. She had seen her children once more, and was now ready to die. The laboring breath grew shorter, the muscles relaxed, and almost imperceptibly did the vital spark go out! As gently as the dying away of the wind on a summer's evening, she sunk

*As sweetly as a child,  
Whom neither thought disturbs nor care encumbers,  
Tired of long play, at close of summer's day,  
Lies down and slumbers.*

Now this was not a case where any remarkable vision was indulged to the departing soul, nor any rapturous joy. But it was the quiet termination of a long, laborious, and quiet life. To one ever distrustful of herself, and always regarding herself as the least of all saints, if a christian at all; one who avoided public observation and strove only to do her duty in several relations of a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a mother, any marvelous death-bed experience would have been out of place, and I should have distrusted such an exhibition. But simple steadfast trust in Christ were appropriate, and in keeping with her life, and if I could only dare to hope that the like sweet submission and calm confidence may stay me up in a dying hour, I ask for no brighter visions. Indeed that midnight scene seemed to rob death of half its terrors, for why should I so fear to enter that dark valley, through which I had seen my own sister pass so calmly and quietly?

Nay more? why should I not feel a stronger attraction than before for the home of departed saints? For until she was taken we formed an unbroken circle of five brothers and sisters, the youngest of whom had already seen three score years. It seemed a charmed circle, which death was unwilling to break. But now the silver cord is loosed, not to be joined together again in this world. Yet there is consolation in the thought, that if our hopes do not deceive us, it will be only a few days before it will be reunited in everlasting love to God and one another.

Died at Conway, August 22, 1854, Emelia, wife of Capt. Henry P. Billings, aged 65. E.H.

*[Source: Greenfield Gazette and Courier, October 2, 1854.]*

## Sermon 5 Gospel Message

[Sermon No. 5, "Gospel Message," Judges 3:20, 1820 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 1]

Judges 3:20

*I have a message from God unto thee.*

But my hearers I have no such message as he had who originally spoke these words. This was Ehud the Israelite when he came to bring presents to Eglon being of Moab. This prince eighteen years before had conquered the children of Israel and ruled over them during that period. But the Lord at length raised up Ehud as a deliverer. Being appointed to carry the presents of the Israelites to Eglon, after delivering them he told the king that he had a message from God unto him. And when he had risen to receive it Ehud drew forth a hidden dagger and plunged it through his body.

Such a dreadful command as this I thank God he does not require me to execute. The message that I bear is the gospel message. I could wish indeed that it might prove the dagger of conviction to every impenitent sinner: but it is no less calculated to soothe and animate the heart of the real Christian. It is the revelation of an all sufficient Savior to a lost world. It exhibits a God whose mercy has been abused, ready to pardon the chief of sinners. But it also holds forth conditions on which this pardon will be granted, and these are repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To a compliance with these conditions, it annexes the promise of immortal glory but to those who turn a deaf ear to the gracious invitation it proclaims *indignation and wrath, tribulations and anguish*.

To this message, then, let us attend in a more particular manner, and see what it brings to each one of us, according to our respective characters.

In the first place, there is in the Gospel from God to myself. Here then, O my soul, what the Spirit saith unto those, who have taken upon them to preach the everlasting gospel.

*Son of Man have made thee a watchman, unto the house of Israel (Ezekiel 3:17). Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet and shew my people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins (Isaiah 58:1). When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way that wicked man shall die in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at thine hand (Ezekiel 33:8). Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the Shepherd feed the flocks? (Ezekiel 34:2) Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord that thou fulfill it. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season and out-of-season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.*

With such solemn charges directed to him, what man is there who would not feel his responsibility, and, at least make an effort to declare the whole counsel of God? Now these and many more similar

exhortations are pressed upon the conscience of every man, who devotes himself to the Gospel ministry. You cannot therefore, my brethren, consider me as assuming a power to which I have no right. When I proceed in the next place to say that just to the established, persevering questions I have a message from God unto thee. And it is a consoling message. You have been wise in time. You have chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from you. The opposition of an evil heart, the influence of a sinful world, did not prevent you from boldly taking up your cross and avouching the Lord to be your God - devoting your bodies and spirit entirely and forever to his service. And now you may claim the glorious promises of the Gospel as your own. Do you Christ hath said, *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Verily, verily I say unto you whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you.* To you also does Paul speak when he says, *There is therefore, now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1). Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (Peter 2:9). What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who shall be against us? He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?*

Oh Christian, let not such a happy state of feeling as you enjoy while growing in grace be at any time lost. For you may lose it. You may grieve the Holy Spirit lest he strive with you no more. Let your prayers continually ascend for more faith, more love, and more devotedness to the service of your Redeemer. Then shall your heart feel the value of that promise he has made. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7). He that overcome, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more.*

Perhaps, however, some humble diffident soul may answer, that he can lay claim to none of these promises and consolations. For he is full of doubt, whether he be a son of God or a servant of sin. He cannot read clearly his title to eternal life. And why can you not? Have you not long since devoted yourself most sincerely to the Lord in an everlasting covenant? Have you not since that period been continually struggling with remaining sin, constant in prayer for help from God, and constant in the discharge of your duty to man? Has your zeal in the cause of Christ greatly diminished and are you sensible of any great relapse from God in your feelings or conduct? Do you begin to give up the merits of Christ as your grounds of salvation, and to trust to your own works? No: you are not sensible of any defects like these. Do not fear that you shall fail of salvation because you are not sincere - because you do not hunger and thirst after righteousness - because your repentance for sin is not deep - because you do not have humility - because you hate God, or man - because you do not examine yourself - because you do not pray fervently and constantly - or because you distrust the power or the promises of God. And because you distrust yourself, and feel that you are unworthy of salvation. And what Christian, what confirmed saint, is not unworthy? But in Christ remember, all fullness dwells; and in Him, in plenteous redemption. Remember also that there is a hope of the hypocrite which shall perish; and this distrust of yours, proves that you have not this hope, and, that whether by your religious state, you are at sincere. The doubts of yours, may be your peculiar trial and necessary to your perseverance. Look, I beseech you, to Christ, who hath said, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. A bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking place shall he not quench.*

I should now proceed to address a message from God to another class of men; but the difficulty is that were this whole assembly composed of such probably not one would suppose himself addressed, unless some marks of his character were previously pointed out to him. In the first place, then, the person who is meant, is one who begins to neglect almost entirely secret prayer. Once he delighted to go into his closet, to hold communion with God; but now he generally forgets it, or, if he sometimes in seasons of worldly trouble resume the practice, he feels none of those deep convictions of sin he formerly did. In the second place, this person conforms more to the world than he once did, and takes more pleasure in the society and conversation of irreligious than religious men. In the third place, he begins to suspect that any peculiar attention to religion is enthusiasm. He does not like to hear much set upon the subject. He does not feel so much for the spread of religion in the world, as he once did, and at times doubts whether the merely moral man is not in as fair a way of salvation as has who hopes he has been born again of the water and the Spirit. This is the man who, professing to be a disciple of Christ, has gone back from following him - has become lukewarm and forsaken his first love. He is a backslider - and let him hear the awakening message directed to him in the word of God – *Ye did men well; who did hinder you? I know the works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead. Remember, therefore, from whence are thou fallen and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

Oh my Christian brethren, does not this warning apply to very many of us? Are we not sensible of great stupidity and indifference in the cause of religion, when we realize its infinite importance. And why are we so? Has God done too little for us to engage our love, after having sent his Son to die for us, his spirit to regenerate and his word to enlighten us, and all of his free, unmerited grace? Or has our Savior suffered too little and not having where to lay his head, in being buffeted, smitten and spit upon. In his agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and in being nailed to the cross? Oh my brethren, we do indeed *crucify the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame. He is wounded in the house of his friends.* Every instance of indifference in his cause and every sin we commit after having proffered his name before the world, pierces with another nail those hands, already streaming with the blood of innocence - plants another crown of thorns upon that head already loaded with the sins of the world, and extorts another agonizing, bloody sweat from that body which *was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.*

I proceed, in the next place, to deliver the Gospel message to that person, who is brought to realize his danger while out of Christ, and is sincerely enquiring what he must do to be saved. But is there any such person in this assembly? What! are all who are present Christians? Then is this, indeed, a happy and favoured congregation – the like to which cannot probably be found on this side of the grave. Oh, I dare not with the utmost stretch of charity, presume that there are none here, who are not reconciled to Christ - and if there be any who are sinners, treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, I would hope there is at least one who is alive to his danger. To such an one let it be said: the Spirit of God is now striving with you, and urging you by all the motives of the gospel, to turn unto the Lord, to repent of your sins and become a new creature. Remember the directions of Peter on the day of Pentecost – *repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* You may also apply to yourself the words of Paul to the trembling jailer. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.* You may perhaps suppose that you are doing everything in your power to produce this happy change, and that you are ready and willing to follow any course in which you may become a Christian. Why, then, are you not a Christian? Is the fault chargeable upon God because his grace is not given to convert you? This you will not dare to alledge - the fault then lies with yourself. You are not yet opposed in your heart - to God and to the way of salvation which He has provided. You have not yet been brought to yield yourself entirely and



unreservedly to Christ and to except of salvation. Through his atonement as a free, unmerited gift. [inserted between lines: Your pride has not yet been subdued – and although your understanding has been convinced yet your heart deceitful above all things chooses not to yield] You must give up this opposition - You must receive salvation on God's terms - You must no longer hope to be made clean by washing in Abana and Pharpar, but in Jordan, and in Jordan only. Make an entire surrender of yourself to Christ and then but not till then will you be converted. And I entreat you, do not delay this surrender. Do not suffer your religious impressions to wear off. If you neglect this opportunity, it may be your last. There is, indeed, every probability that you will never more be awakened, but be given over to a reprobate mind, *a vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction*. Nay, if you continue your resistance another day, you may seal up your final condemnation.

These reflections naturally bring me to address another class of persons. If there be any one in this house, who can recollect, that he was once awakened to see his danger and alarmed for his eternal safety, but suffered these impressions to wear away, and is now living without God and without hope, to him I have indeed a message from God: and it is a message of terror. You have resisted the kind warnings of the Spirit, and spurned from your heart, a bleeding and a merciful Saviour. And now, what probability is there that this Spirit and the Saviour, so slighted and so insulted, will ever return to your relief? For, says an apostle, *if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary: because I have called, says God, and thou hast refused - I also will laugh at your calamity - I will mock when your fear cometh - When your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you - then shalt thou call upon me, but I will not answer thou shalt seek me lastly, shall not find me*. And is not your case, my friend, described by Paul, when he says *It is impossible for those who have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gifts to and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame*. Is not your case then a desperate one? Is there even a possibility to renew your you again to repentance, when you have refused to harken to the merciful warnings God has given you? He alone knoweth whether you have committed an unpardonable sin. We know he has, in a few instances, awakened the person the second time - and whether yours may not be one of those few instances, we cannot say. But if this be assured, that every day's delay renders your case more desperate and hopeless.

In the next place, I call upon an enthusiastic extensive class of men to harken to a message from God. I mean those, who are neutral - who apparently neither violently oppose nor cordially receive, the Gospel, and who are willing to let alone religion if religion will let them alone. Such a man may be strictly moral in all his extends external actions: nay, he may be constant in attending upon public worship, and even perhaps upon the special ordinances of the Gospel. But all this and even more is consistent with an entire destitution of vital holiness - may, with the habitual commission of secret, willful sins. Indeed, it is probable, that in Christian countries, this neutral, accommodating course of conduct is adopted by many, because it is the most favorable to uninterrupted and uncensored indulgence in sin; and not because such persons have any more love of religion. *For the casual mind*, that is, every casual mind, *is enmity against God - is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be*. That man is not in all cases the greatest sinner, who is apparently so. Every unregenerated person has some predominant passion; and provided he can indulge this, he finds little difficulty in restraining his other passions. If this favorite idol be ambition, or honor, or glory, or vanity, or drunkenness, or reveling - the man cannot worship it in secret, but must expose himself to the public eye. If, however, it be pride or lust or avarice or detraction,

this worship may be performed in a great measure in secret. And it is for the interest of such a man, to conceal this devotion - because he may in this way escape the censure of the religious and retain a decent character in society. Hence we see the reason why many, who are respectable in the world as moral and regular men, I found at heart the most bitter opposers of true religion, remaining insensible to every promise and threatening of the Gospel - while others, who are openly corrupt, are converted and saved. Christ has forcibly illustrated this subject by a parable - *A certain man had two sons and he came to the first and he said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said I will not; but afterward repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise and he answered and said I go, Sir, and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him the first. Jesus saith unto them verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.* The nature of man has not changed since the days of Christ, and this parable is as applicable to thousands in every age as it was to the chief priests and Pharisees. We still seen many an open profligate, abandoning his sins and embracing religion; while many an apparently moral man resists every warning and every invitation and lives and dies without God and without hope. The truth is that the love of sin in such a man is often more rooted than in many of profligate because he has been longer habituated to it. I do not mean to include all unregenerate men who lead moral lives - and thus defend the dangerous error, that the most corrupt and shameless sinners are more likely to receive the grace of God than others.

*[The following paragraph is written on a small slip of paper that has been placed over the original text.]*

But I speak here only of those whose habits of sin and irreligion have become so rooted that it seems almost as difficult to abandon them as for the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots. And I speak only of those openly corrupt men who have been hurried away by violent temptations or evil companions for a while but whose course of profligacy has been short - And even with these limitations I would not willingly believe that such a man is oftener converted than that description of moral persons above mentioned did not stubborn and undoubted facts show this to be the case.

*[Below the insert the text continues.]*

*...can you escape the damnation of hell:*

There are others of the numerous class included under the externally moral, whose thoughts and affections are so engrossed in the pursuit of riches, or honors, or glory, that they never spend time to inquire whether the Gospel be true or false; and who, therefore, manifest no opposition to it, provided it does not interfere with their darling pursuits. Were not rich men *like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear*, they could not be insensible to the alarming declaration of Christ - *Woe unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation! Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.*

There are others, who are too indolent to examine or oppose religion. You cannot draw them by promises - you cannot awaken them by threatenings. In regard to such, it can only be said *Sleep on now and take your rest. Fear not that you shall sleep forever. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the triumph of God.*

Others again are trusting to their amiable dispositions and upright conduct for salvation. Oh that such would remember, that the man who had kept all the commandments from his youth up, and whom Christ ever love, yet lacked one thing. He had no treasure in heaven.

And lastly there are others who are endeavouring to gain both this world and the next. These seek to conduct themselves in such a manner that they shall not lose the pleasures of sin, nor the enjoyment of heaven. Their hearts are in truth fully set upon the world; and they attend to religion only during the intervals of relaxation from earthly pursuits. They join perhaps in family prayers, morning and evening, attend church on the Sabbath, and are attentive to all the external duties of religion and with this *mint, anise and cumin* of piety, they hope to purchase heaven. *But know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity against God? Have you never read, that if any man love the world the love of the father is not in him? That you cannot serve two masters? That whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God?*

One more class of men remains to be addressed and I have done. But would it not be in vain to call on the dead to awake and live? Not if God had commanded it: for He is able to make them hear and come forth from the grave. And so is he able to cause those to hear who are dead in trespasses and sins. Through the instrumentality of his word, which is the sword of the Spirit, even the conscience of the thief, the robber, the adulterer, the fornicator, the glutton, the drunkard, the profane, the fraudulent, the dishonest, the slanderer and the Sabbath breaker is sometimes reached, penetrated and aroused. Indeed, how can even such persons, besotted and stupefied as they are, and to every good work reprobate, how can they remain unmoved by the terrors of the Lord, thundered against them in the Bible? *Be not deceived neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetors, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable and murderers, and whoremongers and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone - and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.*

My hearers it has been my intention in this discourse to address every individual in this assembly. I would hope, indeed, that some of the characters to whom I have spoken, are not to be found among us. Let that point, however, be settled between your own consciences and your God. To the real Christian, I have delivered a message of peace and joy - to the backsliders, a solemn and affectionate reproof - to the anxious enquirer, an earnest admonition to go on, to him once enlightened, but now stupid, a message of terror - to the neutral, externally morrow man, a warning of his danger, and to the openly corrupt the threatenings of the Almighty. And have all the messages died away on the ears of this congregation without reaching a single heart? I do not call upon you to hearken to my words, [in vain to call on the dead] or my message - but to the words of the Bible - to the message of God. If I have said any thing in my own name, you may indeed disregard it and be guiltless - but what the Bible has said in the name of God, I conjure you, disregard not as you love your immortal souls.

Preached at Amherst East Parish February 6 1820

\_\_\_\_\_ at Deerfield North Parish February 20 1820

\_\_\_\_\_ at Colrain April 1820

\_\_\_\_\_ at Brattleboro West Parish April 23 1820

\_\_\_\_\_ at Leverett July 1820

\_\_\_\_\_ at Conway S.W. part of the town December 1820

\_\_\_\_\_ at Conway center of the town December 1821

## Sermon 9 Deceitfulness of the Heart

[Sermon No. 9, "Deceitfulness of the Heart," Jeremiah 17:9, 1820 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 1]

Jeremiah 17:9

*The heart is deceitful above all things.*

The highest glory of a Christian consists in disinterested love. Indeed without some portion of this virtue no man can be a Christian. There are some however who doubt even its existence in any human heart: And when we consider how linked is selfishness with almost every creation of man we shall not be surprised at such a doubt. But does not our Saviour describe a disinterested love when he says, *Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again?* And Paul also when he says – *Love seeketh not her own?* Besides no one will doubt that God exercises disinterested benevolence in all his dispensations of grace to our guilty world. And we are commanded to be *followers of God as dear children and to be perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* Christ also, in his incarnation sufferings and death to redeem our fallen race, has exhibited a most sublime and unmixed example of disinterested benevolence – And an Apostle hath told us that *Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

The existence of disinterested love then, in the heart of every man who is a real Christian, is certain. But it is one thing to prove the existence of a principle in a certain class of men and quite a different thing to ascertain whether any individual professing to belong to that class possesses it. And in regard to disinterested love the great difficulty in ascertaining whether we have it does not proceed from its being a feeble principle productive of small effects; but from its being mixed with other things. Among these the most subtle and deceitful is selfishness. Originally this possesses the undivided empire of the human heart. And when disinterested love is there implanted by the Spirit of God, selfishness is indeed dethroned, but not expelled: And were it content to remain subordinate to universal benevolence its existence would be right and lawful. But it is a principle that is never satisfied with a part. It continually cries give, give and maintains a constant warfare for regaining its lost dominion over the heart. And in order to effect this it transforms itself into almost every shape and is thus often mistaken for holiness. So closely does it link itself with disinterested love that it is often impossible and always difficult to separate them. Yet it is extremely important that this separation be made: for if a man cannot determine that he possesses disinterested love he has no rational evidence that he is a Christian. Since a religion that begins and ends with self is not the religion of the Gospel. It will then be profitable to point out some instances where this great enemy of our souls may be present – and secretly move our hearts when we suppose ourselves guided by purer motives. In other words I shall endeavor to show our danger of being deceived by our hearts in those exercises and actions which are considered the highest evidence of regeneration and sanctification. And I shall include these exercises and actions under two general classes –

First, as relating to our fellow man, and second as relating to God.

I am then first to show our danger of mistaking the motives that influence us to perform many good actions toward our fellow men. And I would premise that to be influenced in our Christian conduct by the hope of rewards in heaven – of a crown of immortal glory – is not inconsistent with disinterested love – unless this be the sole motive of our conduct: for we are no where commanded to love our neighbor better than ourselves – and by receiving our own eternal happiness we increase the sum of universal happiness – since *there is joy in heaven over sinner that repenteth*. But if in seeking for an eternal inheritance we prefer ourselves to all others - even to the universe and to God, we are selfish and shall perform the duties we owe our neighbors, with an entire reference to our own good – and without any real desire to help him or to make him happy. If such a motive lies at the bottom of all our religion, it will of course influence us in all our conduct towards our fellow men. It will cause us to contribute of our substance to feed the poor – yea and that secretly too. It will cause us to warn the wicked from his way of sin – to enter into our closets and pray for the conversion of our neighbor – for the conversion of the distant heathen and even for the forgiveness of our bitterest enemies: And we shall be prompted to do these things for this plain reason – that we fear if we leave them undone we shall not secure future happiness – since we are commanded by God thus to give and thus to pray. But all this time we may feel no real earnest wish to make the heathen – or the sinner – or our enemy happier by their conversion unless this will be the means of securing heaven for ourselves. In other words were we certain that we should never enter heaven we should perform no such actions nor make any such prayers.

Thus we perceive that selfishness on this kind may produce effects so similar to the fruit of disinterested benevolence that we can easily confound them, but not easily distinguish them. And it is believed that this is one of the deepest sources of deception in the human heart. A person is brought by some alarming providence to realize his danger of eternal misery while destitute of an interest in Jesus Christ. With this danger before him he exercises repentance genuine as he supposes but in reality resulting merely and solely from the fear that his sins will bring him into eternal torments. He now determines to embrace religion and sets about the performance of its various duties to himself his fellow man and is God. But all this while the fear of punishment or the hope of happiness is the sole motive that influences him. And yet he is so blinded that he supposes himself to love his neighbor as himself and his God with all his heart and mind and strength. Whereas, in truth, he feels no other complacence or benevolence toward man than what springs from instinctive piety - or compassion and his feelings towards God at the best are no more than gratitude for an expected favour - and are no different from what they would be if a cruel tyrant were at the head of the universe who should grant to him a similar hope of eternal life. Such a man at the last day will realize for the first time that *heart is deceitful above all things*.

This is not however the only case in which selfishness may operate in such a manner as to be mistaken for disinterested love. We will suppose a man to enter his closet where no eye but that of God seeth him and there to pray to his Father who siteth in secret. Can it be that selfishness will accompany him here - even before the immediate presence of God? Must not every illusion that blinded his eyes in the world be here destroyed? And must it not be purity for the sake of holiness and a love of communion with God that he has come thither? It is possible that this man may still have a reference to the world - He may hope that the world will some way or other learn that he is in the daily habit of secret devotion - and hence be induced to honor him as a saint. Or it may be he daily performs his duty, with a view to the approbation of some friend to whom he expects afterward to communicate the fact - or he may do it because others do - and he is unwilling to be outdone by anyone. Does he pray for the conversion of his sinful neighbor? May he not do this from a desire to see that neighbor humbled and come to him for direction - whose direction he had always despised and whose principles he had always resisted? If he pray for the conversion of the heathen and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom – it may be all

this is from a wish to gratify pride of opinion: For he may have asserted before some one who disbelieved and ridiculed the idea that the heathen could ever be converted, that such would be the case: And now perhaps he prays for it that may have the gratification of triumphing over this man. Perhaps he prays that his wicked enemy may be converted and perhaps too the motive that drew forth this prayer might be a wish to see this enemy humbled at his feet and imploring his forgiveness.

We will now suppose a man to perform a deed of charity in secret - so secret indeed that not even the poor man who is relieved knows who is his benefactor. Yet did it not occur to this man that in some way or other this generous deed might be known at a future day - when he should have not only the honor of performing it but the still greater honor of keeping it secret? Or did he not often feel a strong disposition to communicate the fact to some near friend that he might stand still higher in his estimation? Or did not the thought occur to him that should his character hereafter be attached, the bringing to light of this disinterested and would be a triumphant vindication? All such suggestions as these springing up in the mind of the giver indicate at least that selfishness is not entirely eradicated from the heart, and that it means to share in the profits of the deed.

But suppose a man secretly to devote a sum of money to the aid of missionary exertions among the heathen - can this be selfish? It may be this man has been charged at a former period with ostentatiously displaying his charity - and still remembering it he determines to make a secret donation that he may bring to light if necessary to refute any future charges of a similar kind. Or he may live in a part of the world where missionary exertions are unpopular and the fear of injuring his profession or his business may prevent him from acting publicly.

If then even in the most secret acts of charity there be danger that selfishness is the motive - how much greater this danger when the deed is published? Where it will be inserted in the religious publications of the day - and where he will be praised for it in the most public places? Let no man trust to such deeds for a proof of his love to God.

Another duty and excellence of the Christian humility. This is exercised towards God and towards man - I am here to put an instance of it as exercised towards the latter. You see this person apparently not *thinking of himself above what he ought to think* in the presence of his fellow men - and esteeming others better than himself. He is also condescending and gentle toward all men. And this is not mere appearance: but the man is sincere and really feels humble. But selfishness has a thousand artifices - and has ensnared this man where he least suspects it - *He is proud of his humility*. Were he removed from the public view where he could not exhibit his humility to the world he would cease to be humble. He now takes every opportunity to display his humble spirit before man - to influence them to do likewise as he flatters himself - but in truth to gain distinction.

We may also acquire the habit of humility before our fellow men and deceive ourselves with the idea that it is humility of heart. We may feel desirous of obtaining the good will of the world; and discover that nothing is so popular as a humble obliging disposition. Hence we make an effort to exercise such a disposition in all our public conduct - and soon acquired a habit of doing this - although our hearts are yet unhumiliated and selfish. We soon flatter ourselves however that our humility is genuine the fruit of holiness and this do our hearts deceive us because we do not look to God *who is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things*.

And is it possible that pride should be the reigning principle within us when we suppose ourselves most free from it? A proud humility! What a contradiction to exist in the same character! *O, the heart is*

*deceitful above all things!*

I proceed to the second general division of this discourse where I am to show our danger of mistaking selfishness for disinterested love or holiness in our exercises and duties towards God. And here the remark that was illustrated under the first general head may be repeated – that our own final happiness may be the only motive by which we are actuated in all our religious exercises and duties not only towards man but also towards God. This motive indeed does and ought to have a powerful influence upon the real Christian: but the soul on which the lost image of God was instamped could not avoid loving this character independently of this consideration: because there is a resemblance between the nature of God and this soul and similarity of dispositions and aims is the only permanent ground of complacency or love between different beings. If we love God because we expect he will bestow upon us eternal life, this love is gratitude only. I would not indeed represent this as an unworthy affection, when joined with the love of complacency: but separate from this it is not that love which the Gospel requires - or rather the Gospel requires both. The love of gratitude alone cannot fit us to enjoy heaven: because a man may possess it while his heart is opposed to the holiness that will constitute the pleasure of heaven. When he views God as his benefactor he may feel a delight and complacency in his character, but when he views him as his righteous judge - *who will render to every man according to his works and who will by no means clear the guilty* when he views Him as the unbending Sovereign of the Universe, *ordering all things after the council of his own will*, and for his own glory - so far is he from loving such a God that he will hate him – and it was not God that he before loved - but only an attribute of God - that is mercy. Here then we see more clearly the difference between the love of gratitude and the love of complacency. The first respects only a part of God and the latter that God perfect in the possession of every every attribute. Yet the effects of both kinds of love are so similar that we are extremely liable to mistake the one for the other. Hence results are danger of being deceived.

But this is not the only form in which selfishness presents itself as the rival of God in our affections and conduct: And I shall endeavor to point out a few more instances where we are in danger from this subtle enemy.

Secret prayer long continued is generally regarded as a good evidence of regeneration. But is it not possible that a man may be influenced to the performance of this from a secret hope that it will increase his reputation in the world as a religious man? He may live among those who regard a man according to his religion and who will not tolerate a neutral Christian and rather than openly oppose such he will persevere in this duty. I do not mean that the man himself supposes he is actuated by any such motive, but may not his love of public favor or fear of public reproach operate insensibly upon him so powerfully as to produce this effect while he hopes it is the influence of the Spirit. Or this man may have some near friend who is so anxious for his salvation that he gives him no rest until he enters upon a course of Christian duty: And the man being of a yielding disposition and besides believing it well to be religious, is moved by this friendly importunity to set about securing his salvation. Now is it not possible that he may continue for a long time in the practice of secret prayer through fear of meeting the reproofs of this friend? When excited to reflection by the solicitations of this friend he made an effort to work up his feelings into a religious frame and succeeded in producing some confused emotions in his heart. These it is true did not continue long: but concluding himself converted this does not trouble him: And although he finds his closet exercises to be very formal and cold yet he imputes this to the peculiar steadiness of his disposition and not to his want of love to God. And this selfishness, transformed into an angel of light, has completely fastened him in bondage.

But what if in our secret devotions we are not mere formalists - and have our feelings excited - and

mourn and weep over our sins apparently after a godly manner - can there be any deception here? It may be that the sins of which we mourn affect our worldly interest or injure our health - indeed what sin does not produce one or both of these effects. Now it may be that here is the cause of our penitential tears and not because we have offended a holy Being and broken in upon the harmony of the Universe and ruined an immortal soul.

But further what if we fervently pray for an increase of holiness in our hearts. Let the enquiry here be made are we not at the time unusually disgusted with the world in consequence of some bitter disappointment - and do we not resort to religion and feel a desire to possess more of it solely because the world has failed to satisfy us - not because we love religion? Should our earthly prospects again brighten, would not our longings after heaven pass away *as the morning cloud and as the early dew*?

We will now examine for a moment the case of a man who has devoted himself sincerely as he supposes to the service of the Lord in body and in spirit - and who is ardent in the cause of his Redeemer in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Formerly perhaps this man was diffident before men but now he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ - and lifts up his banners in the name of God - calling upon the wicked to flee to the strong hold of safety. Now in regard to the zeal of this man we will make ~~no~~ ~~several~~ suppositions. Perhaps he is tried in vain to rise to distinction in the world by any of the ordinary paths - as by riches or learning - or eloquence. Mortified and disappointed he resorts to religion and resolve sincerely to embrace it. But he has not proceeded far in it before he perceives that even here is a chance for preeminence. His efforts are now redoubled and his zeal renewed - and all from the influence of the love of distinction but as he supposes through the influence of the Spirit. You may object to this supposition that his pride would never submit to the humbling doctrines of the Gospel unless broken by the grace of God: but my brethren do you not know that ambition will submit to anything if it can finally attain its object?

We will now suppose this man to be one who has neither those talents nor riches that are necessary to make him distinguished in the world - and who must therefore drag through life in obscurity unless he can devise some other mode of rising to eminence. He finds that his exertions in the cause of religion excite the attention of men - and his apparent devotion to the cause of Christ gains him many admirers and furnishes a passport into the best society. Is any other subject but religion introduced before him - he speaks of it with contempt and endeavors to exclude it from conversation - because as he supposes he loves religion better than everything else but in truth because he is ignorant of every other subject and is too proud to expose his ignorance. O in how many forms may sin lurk in our hearts and cheat our souls of heaven!

A love of the word of God is one of the attendants upon regeneration and ordinarily furnishes no inconsiderable evidence of this change - Yet here too our great spiritual enemy selfishness lies in wait to deceive. We may have a love for contending or arguing upon doctrinal subjects - and if such be the case we shall soon perceive the need of a thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures: And if we chance to be defeated by an adversary but once in consequence of our ignorance of the bible we shall set about reading it with unwearied eagerness - Our pride has been wounded and will give us no rest until it be avenged. This excitement grounded wholly in pride we mistake for love to the word of God - Or if we have not a disposition to engage in disputation concerning religion there will be many instances in which we should feel much mortified by an ignorance of the bible - and this consideration alone may induce us to apply ourselves to a diligent searching of the Scriptures.

In like manner we may account for a disposition to attend on all the ordinances of the Gospel where



there is no love to God. These ordinances are public - and offer a fair opportunity for gratifying *the lust of the eye and the pride of life*. But it is so evident that we are in danger of deceiving ourselves in this respect that it is unnecessary to dwell upon the subject.

I have thus far considered our danger of being deceived by selfishness in the Christian exercises and doctrines - And this indeed is our greatest enemy: but this is not the only one. Thus, an increase of the graces of the heart and the virtues of the life is regarded as one of the best evidences of our possessing religion. But here habit may deceive us - For when we have been long habituated to anything it becomes easier and more pleasant even if it were disgusting at first. Hence when we think we derive more pleasure from secret prayer and communion with God - and feel more devoted to the Lord and more humble than we once did may not all this result from being long in the habit of such prayer - such devotion and such humility rather than from an actual increase of these graces in the heart?

We are in danger also of self - deception from our animal instinct and feelings - Thus when we read the history of the Redeemer how innocent and spotless was his life and how unjust and cruel his sufferings and death we weep over the descriptions and suppose our sorrow to rise from our love to his character. Yet should we not feel a similar sorrow were we to read the history of the sufferings of some other great and innocent man? But this subject of the influence of animal feelings upon the religion of the heart is too extensive to admit of examination at this time.

I have endeavored my Christian brethren at this time to exhibit some of those modes in which we may be deceived by selfishness in the discharge of our most solemn and sacred duties to God and man. And may I not appeal to your experience for proof that I have not been pointing out dangers that are merely imaginary? Have you not often in seasons of self-examination found difficulty in deciding whether all your exercises and actions did not result from selfish or instinctive feelings? It may perhaps be [????] that I am exciting needless fears and [????] thus drive the humble Christian to despair. Far be it from me my brethren to sound a false alarm or distress a believer without a cause. For is it not a fact that where one man is driven to despair by too rigid rules of self-examination thousands perish by listening to the cry of peace, peace when there is no peace? Can we be too particular in looking into our own hearts? Can we be too vigilant in spying out the secret lurking places of the enemies of our souls? It is not supposed however that every Christian will be able to trace his own exercises and actions all the distinctions that have been made in this discourse. And this leads me to state the important inference to be derived from this subject. We are hereby taught our own weakness and dependence on God. So long as we suppose our spiritual foes to be few and our spiritual wants small we shall rely on our own strength. But when we realize that the enemies of our salvation lie in wait for us in our most secret and solemn exercises - even in the holy of holies - and that *the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*- giving us all confidence in ourselves, we cry out with the Psalmists, *who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Yes we must resort to God for light and for direction and if we put all our confidence in Him, His spirit will be a wall of fire round about us - His holy word will become a sword turning every way to defend us from evil. *If any man lacks wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not - what shall be given him - Christ will put all enemies at his feet - keep him from the evil that is in this world and finally conduct him to immortal glory.*

Delivered

At Brattleboro West Parish May 1820 May 1 1820

At Conway March 1821

## Sermon 10 Christians Weep Over Sinners

[Sermon No. 10, "Christians Weep Over Sinners," Luke 19:41, 1820 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 2]

Luke 19:41

*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.*

And who is this thus giving vent to his feelings? Surely it must be some one who being forewarned of a dreadful calamity about to befall his native city is touched in his heart with the reflection that all his possessions and dearest friends may perish in the approaching ruin. In that city was he born - and educated in the midst of the ease - of learning - refinement and friendship. There he has been long respected - loved and honoured. How many tender and overwhelming emotions now crowd upon his soul as from an eminence this city with all its spires and palaces - its crowded marts and busy streets - burst upon his sight and seems to fill all the plain. Soon will this world in miniature move full of life and pleasure where they are eating and drinking marrying and giving in marriage - soon will it be burnt with fire or buried by an earthquake or blasted by a hurricane. And then what weeping and wailing - will succeed to this scene of happiness! Perhaps too he will be the first messenger to convey to the inhabitant the warning of its overthrow.

But my hearers I need not tell you that this description by no means corrects. Jerusalem was this city and he who wept over it the Redeemer of mankind - *the man of sorrows who has not where to lay his head* - the persecuted despised and hated Jesus? He had indeed a prophetic view of the dreadful ruin that would soon overtake the place. He saw that *the days would come upon it, that its enemies should cast a trench about it and compass it round and keep it in on every side - and lay it even with the ground and the child within it - and that they should not leave in it one stone upon another - and that there should be great distress in the land and wrath upon the people - and that they should fall by the edges of the sword and be led way captive into all nations and Jerusalem be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* All these woes did the Redeemer foresee: but they were to come upon Jerusalem. And this was not the city of his birth - nor of his possessions - nor of his friends. It was on the other hand the city whose rulers were his most bitter enemies - whose people were plotting his destruction and whose voice he already heard with a prophetic ear, crying with savage ferocity - *away with him, away with him. Crucify him - crucify him. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem those that killest the prophets art stoned them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered my children together even as a hen gathers her children under her wings and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate! Here my brethren is love stronger than death. And fulfilled so that was now what whatever was underneath that crucify him crucify him in short just be sure you in short it was a city by whose walls his omniscient already saw his own cross training with his wife. Over the city did Jesus weep. And how tender his Lamentations.*

*[The following paragraph was written on a small piece of paper laid over page 4; it may have been intended as an insert, or as an alternate, to the previous paragraph.]*

In short it was the city by whose walls his omniscient eye already saw his own cross streaming with his blood. Yet over this city did Jesus weep. And how tender his lamentation!

But it was not for the temporal miseries of Jerusalem that the Redeemer poured forth his tears. He most of all over her moral desolations - over her people, blinded in heart - her temple polluted - the holy of holies profaned - and his long suffering God, insulted. These were the cause of all his miseries. These drew down the wrath of heaven. And not even the tears of the Son of God could save her from destruction: for her cup of iniquity was full.

The doctrine I would derive from the interesting fact here related to our Saviour, is this - *It is the duty of Christians to weep over sinners.*

1. Because all such are blinded [*This head is crossed out.*]
2. Because their destruction is impending
3. Because they are blinded.

Yet in the third place notwithstanding this overwhelming prospect before him the sinner is blinded to its terrors and sits unconcerned in the very jaws of destruction. We cannot avoid feeling of compassion for the man who is born blind - or is deprived of his vision by any accident or disease. All the rich scenes in the heavens above and on earth beneath from which we derive so much pleasure - and the face of kindred and of friends - are shut out from him - and he grope through the world in continual darkness. And if such an one persisted in going towards a precipice - which he saw not and down which he must inevitably fall - and if you could not persuade him to turn his steps how great would be your grief and anguish. But how much more pitiable is it to see an immortal soul capable of knowing, loving and enjoying its Creator forever and ever - voluntarily blinded to its true interest and danger and with a headstrong madness pressing toward the gulph of everlasting perdition! Yet such is the case with every man whose supreme affections are not fixed on another world.

In the first place he is blind to his true interest. I do not mean that he is blind to his worldly interest. For to secure this he will *rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness*. No labours - no solicitude - no watchfulness are too arduous and distressing if they result in an increase of his possessions or his honors. But present religion to the mind of the sinner in all its winning and glorious aspects - and you seem to him as one who speaketh in parables. Perhaps he will listen to you for a moment and be pleased with something in your appearance or manner: but you cannot reach his heart. Press the doctrines of the Gospel upon him still closer - try every point of approach - appeal to his reason - to his imagination and his feelings and explore every avenue to his conscience. You will labor in vain. You cannot penetrate that thick darkness which envelopes his mind.

Now this blindness cannot proceed from a want of evidence to religion or from its being a matter of small importance. For so decisive is this evidence that few at this day think of questioning it. And as to its importance if you present the case simply unfairly to any man however abandoned he will acknowledge that it is infinitely important to tell him that his life is short, uncertain, and full of trouble and disappointment - and that its best pursuits do not afford any permanent enjoyment and he will acknowledge all this because he feels it in his own experience. Tell him further that there is a God - and that it is probable even from reason alone that the soul will exist in another state - and that therefore it is wise to prepare for that state - with all diligence and immediately since such preparation will not lessen; but increase the real enjoyments of this life - and he will assent to all this. But urge him now to act on these principles - and to submit to the Gospel - and you will find him like *the deaf adder that*

*stoppeh her ear.* His heart will resist and repel every such conviction of his understanding. O Christian weep in secret places for such an one, *for he has eyes to see but seeth not - he has ears to hear and heareth not. His understanding is darkened - being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him because of the blindness of his heart.*

Secondly the sinner is blind to his danger.

Were you to see a man rushing into the devouring flames – or down a precipice it would need little argument to convince you that such an one was blind. And is it not equally clear that he is blind whose every step whose every action brings him nearer the pit of everlasting destruction? You will see the sinner awake and alive to every danger that threatens his temporal comforts. Does the fire threaten to devour his dwelling - the floods to destroy his harvest - the thief to invade his possessions – the slanderer to rob him of his reputation - or the envious to cheat him of his honors? Mark how pale and emaciated that man appears in consequence of his anxieties and watchings on these accounts. How much solicitude - how many sleepless nights - how the fear of these things cost him? Nay more he not only fears when there are real temporal dangers before him - but he fancies dangers that have no existence - yet they torment him month after month and year after year. O where he as anxious - as quick cited and as faithful to discern his spiritual dangers all would be well. But the fear of dwelling in everlasting burnings with *dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie* - the fear of being *cast into outer darkness where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched where is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth* - all these things to which he knows himself exposed do not cost him one sleepless hour and scarcely one anxious thought. You may urge him most earnestly and most affectionately to remember that he must die - but you cannot fasten his thoughts for one hour upon the grave or upon that world of torments beyond it. Is not this blindness – nay more is it not infatuation and self murder?

It has been shown in that in what respects the sinner is blind - and we will next enquire what it is that has blinded him.

And first he is blinded by the world.

The very blessings that are bestowed by a bountiful God upon man become by his abuse of them - the means of hardening his heart and blinding his eyes. He forgets whence his mercies flow and imputes them to his own prudence and management. His affections become supremely fixed upon earthly possessions and enjoyments - and he is more and more alienated from God in his feelings and conduct because, *if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.* Indeed through the whole N. Testament the love of the world and the love of God are described as directly opposite. Where the world prevails God is not in all the thoughts. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon* is the testimony of Christ - his Apostles - his martyrs and all his true followers. Hence when men will persist notwithstanding this testimony to set their affections supremely on the world, *they are given up to strong delusions to believe a lie.* Suppose a man to be ardent in the pursuit of riches - to devote all his time and thoughts to their acquisition. How will his heart thus upon gold revolt when he hears the command of Christ - *go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven!* This work be a hard saying and he like the young man to whom it was addressed will go away sorrowful: but his sorrow will be that of the world which worketh death - and not that godly service that worketh repentance unto life.

Suppose a man to be supremely devoted to the attainment of worldly honours. How will he bear the

reproof of Christ, *How can ye believe which receive honor one of another and see not the honor that cometh from God only?* He will not bear it but resist it and thus render his heart still blinder and harder. And need I say that the soul which is sunk in sensuality is thus blinded to the glorious light of the Gospel? Can a man thus brutalized receive pleasure from considering God as him *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity - as the holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty?*

The truth is, my brethren, an inordinate love of the world spreads before the eyes of our mind such a thick darkness that we cannot penetrate the pure regions of heaven. We are what Paul calls natural men - *the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.* Yes, here is the whole difficulty - we are blind and pleased with our blindness or rather do not know it. So that Spiritual things appear to us mere folly. We are chained down to a contracted spot of earth - and our immortal souls found to rise and expand - make no struggle to burst their vile fetters. Such and so powerful is the influence of the world over the heart of the sinner.

But there is another subtle and powerful enemy that leads him astray from holiness and this is *the prince of the power of the air*. Let the sinner scoff at the idea, but it is true, if the bible be true, that he is *led captive by Satan at his will*. This great enemy of all righteousness is permitted to have a powerful influence over his mind and to turn him still farther from God. He daily watches to ensnare him by new temptations - he inflames his passions and stirs up his hatred of God - and makes him a willing and obedient subject of his will. Perhaps I shall be charged with imputing cruelty to God by representing Satan thus active in his influence upon men: but my hearers what says the bible? *Ye are of your father the Devil*, says Christ to the ungodly Jews, *and the lusts of your Father ye will do.*

Paul speaks of the *Prince of the power of the air who now worketh in the children of disobedience* - and in another place, *that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil who are taken captive by him at his will*. And again he says, *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices*. Also in other places he says, *Neither give place to the Devil - put on the whole armor of God, that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil*. Says Peter, *Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour*. If these texts and many more that might be named do not represent men as being influenced by the prince of darkness, what language can do it. But as to the charge against the justice of God derived from this doctrine, there is no foundation for it. Because men are perfectly voluntary and free in permitting this great adversary to operate upon their hearts. *Resist the Devil*, says an apostle, *and he will flee from you*. By their sins against God, men alienate themselves from him - and invite the influence of the Prince of darkness. They voluntarily perform his will - whether they know it or not - they delight in his character - whether they know it or not - and the influence he is permitted to exert upon them is only to help them forward in their own chosen way. They therefore cannot complain of God for not protecting them since they have made themselves enemies to God by wicked works and ranged themselves under the banner of the great enemy of God.

O Christian does not your heart melt within you, for the unhappy sinner who is blind to his true interest and his danger and who is a willing and obedient subject to the most cruel and malicious being in the universe - *led captive by him at his will* chained as a bond slave to his chariot to perform the vilest offices - and trampled under his feet. And worse than all this sinner loves his vile condition and will not exchange it to be made *a king and a priest unto God!* All the glories and the joys of heaven are suspended over his head and within his reach, in vain. You may point him to the new Jerusalem with its walls of precious stones - its gates of pearl and its pavements of gold - where there is *no need of the sun*,

*neither of the moon to shine in it because the glory of God enlightens it and the Lamb is the light thereof.* You may there direct his eye to the *pure river of the water of life clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb* - to the tree of life and its branches which beareth all manner of fruits and yieldeth her fruits every month and standeth in the midst of the paradise of God. You may exhibit before him a merciful God exhausting the stores of his compassion to win him to that place of happiness – nay you may call upon him to look at the Son of God. Standing as a day's man between earth and heaven and reaching forth to him a crown of immortal glory. Yet by all these glories and invitations and joys you will find the sinner unmoved. So think a the film is before his eyes - so thick is the darkness that Satan and the world have cast about him that not even the light of heaven can penetrate it. Nor will it by any more availing to him to look downward into those flames that rise forever and ever from the bottomless gulph beneath his feet. You behold him suspended between heaven and hell by those cords of love which God yet fastens to our guilty race. But every day does the weight of his sins increase - and one by one are these cords broken and the sinner continually descends farther from heaven. His eyes become more blinded - the calls of mercy more faint and the warnings of the Spirit more few. Even now is the sword of God's justice raised to cut the last cord that holds him above the lake of fire. It lingers for a moment, over the blow, being held back by a pleading Saviour. But it must fall - it has fallen - it is finished. Yes it has fallen upon thousands who are now lifting up their eyes in hell being in torment. (See last page but one)

[Insert]

In the first place then I assert that it is the duty of the Christian to weep in view of the sinner because his destruction is impending.

[The transcription resumes from page 13.]

Were he to continue the servant of sin and of Satan under circumstances as favourable as he enjoys in this life, his condition would not be so pitiable. There is so much in education example and the fear of worldly reproach to prevent the genuine effects of sin in this world: that it is here comparatively harmless – nay the sinner derives much transient pleasure from the practice of it - and will not believe that its nature is so ruinous and dreadful as it is described in the bible. But this scene of things will soon have a close - how soon to anyone of us God only knows. The chaff will be separated from the wheat and *the wheat will be gathered into the garner - but the chaff will be burned with fire unquenchable.* In describing the place of torment prepared for every sinner stronger or more alarming language cannot be used than is found in the Bible. It is called *a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone - the furnace of fire - a place of utter darkness and of the blackness of darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth - the shadow of death - the bottomless pit* – and *the winepress of the wrath of God.* Into such a place of torment must every sinner enter at death - and the restraint that in this world so much modify and soften the effects of sin will be taken away and the miserable beings be left to feel the fury of sinful unbridled ungratified and undying desires. There too will the sinner realize the justice of his doom and every new pang that he feels will swell the agonizing idea that he might have escaped that place of woe.

Such that will be the destruction of every sinner at death. But when will this period arrive? Perhaps not until threescore years and ten have passed. Press within one year - one month - one day - one hour - nay perhaps this moment. Do you ask proof of this? Look abroad into the world and see *a thousand falling at your side and ten thousand at your right hand.* Among these you will find persons of all ages and descriptions. Destruction then impends over the sinner every hour. Perhaps the next moment he may begin to feel the gnawing of the worm that never dies. He stands as it were balancing between life and

death. And but a single thread move but one inch - and he is fallen. O is there no method to save them? Entreat him in the most tender manner to escape from his danger and if he will not listen to you stretch forth your hand and pluck him from the precipice. Alas he is deaf to your warnings - he resists all your kind efforts - and soon the shaft of death will smite him, when he will be beyond the regions of mercy. Weep then over the ruin of this immortal soul with the lamentation of Christ over Jerusalem, saying, *if thou hast known, even thou, at least in this day the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.*

Secondly - another argument to move the compassion of the Christian for the sinner is found in the fact that his destruction will be an everlasting destruction. However aggravated the punishment of the wicked in the world it might be tolerable were it to have an end. But when we add the word eternal to this punishment it becomes too great and terrible to comprehend much less to endure. When it is said that the sinner shall be thrust into a furnace of fire for thousand years, we can form some faint idea of his suffering. Let this thousand years be repeated a thousand times and we have some imperfect conception of the duration and magnitude of his torments. Let this number be repeated many millions of times and we do not even entirely lose the idea. But when it is said that this immense period is literally nothing in comparison with eternity - we are confounded and can pursue the plot no farther. Yet there is no doctrine of the bible - not even the being and Attributes of God more clearly revealed than is that of eternal torments. How solemn and yet how decided on this point is that description Christ has given of the day of judgment and of the fate of every sinner. The judge will first separate all mankind into two great classes - no one recollect is excepted - *Then shall he say to them on the left hand depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels - And these shall go away into everlasting punishment. But the righteous into an everlasting life.* And throughout the bible the state that follows death is described as unchanging. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, says Solomon, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave wither thou goest.* And there is an inspired comment on the passage, *he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: he that is holy, let him be holy still.* O it is the word eternal that gives an overwhelming solemnity to the subject. It is this word which makes heaven supremely desirable and hell supremely horrible. When the sinner has felt for millions of ages the unceasing pang of his torments he is no nearer that point of decrease as when he can look forward to their termination. He may often break in upon the solemn silence of this prison by calling aloud for mercy and deliverance: but the only answer he will ever hear to this pleading voice will be an echo from every side of those gloomy mansions, *it is eternal!* (See last leaf)

*[A paragraph on page 16 is crossed out and is not transcribed. The transcription resumes at the bottom of page 16.]*

Christian brethren, I know that I need not make any further appeal to those who have drunk unto the Spirit of Christ. You cannot refuse to weep over a fellow man - so blind - so secure - so exposed and so perverted. All your Christian sympathies will be awakened and you will exclaim with the Prophet - *O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night over this ruined immortal soul!* And such a feeling as this will prompt you to what? - to pray for sinners - It is true that you can scarcely do anything to offend them more. Let it be known to a sinner that a Christian is going to his closet and is there supplicating God to convert and save him - and the sinner will despise him and hate him. If then you weep and pray for your sinful neighbors you may expect to feel his resentment - to have all manner of evil spoken of you falsely - and to be spitefully used. But let this only stir you up not to to revenge but to weep more bitterly and pray more fervently as did your Redeemer over that city which hated him and was ready to crucify him. *And God peradventure will give*



*him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. He will not weep for himself - he will not pray for himself – Have mercy upon him then and weep for his tears and pray his prayers - or he is without a friend in a world of enemies. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.*

*[This may be the original ending of the sermon. The following, possibly an alternate ending added later, may be the “last leaf” referred to above.]*

Finally there is one consideration that appears one would think with almost irresistible power to a large proportion of the professing Christians whom I address. To some of the individuals who are in the alarming condition which I have described they are bound by the strongest natural ties. They my brethren are your own neighbours, your own brothers or sisters, your fathers or mothers, your wives or husbands, or your own children. And were your faith in as lively exercise as the Redeemer your tears could not but flow as you think upon the prospects. Amiable as they now seem to you yet having never been renewed by the Spirit of God they must feel his most terrible wrath the moment death takes them out of the world. Do you fancy that some how or other they will escape? Never; except by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. O what a state of stupidity must you be in, not to see and feel and weep over their prospects! Your insensibility is more difficult to explain than theirs; for you profess to have some spiritual life while they are spiritually dead! Is it not probable that you are so too? How deeply are we affected when we see severe temporal sufferings imposed over nearest friends. But unspeakable and everlasting sufferings impend every hour over those who are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. And yet we feel it not. Oh if we had the Spirit of Christ deep – intense - would be our agony - and with Paul we should cry out, *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* Not only should we weep bitter tears but we should pray like him in an agony: and we should labour and strive for their conversion as if everything else were of no importance. Is there a spirit among us anything like this? If not it is not strange that so many of our children and friends remain under the wrath and curse of Almighty God. And there until you and I my Christian brothers and sisters awake to their danger and our duty must they live. Nor is the period distant when to awake will be in vain. Their efforts will be forever sealed: and as they pass into eternity unconverted we shall hear them dying cry, *too late - too late.* Oh can you or I be happy in heaven so long as memory reminds us that our stupidity and unfaithfulness have sent a friend or even a child down to the world of despair!

Delivered

At Amherst West Parish June 1841

At Saratoga Springs 1820

At Conway February 27 1820

At Conway December 1824

At Muddy Brook March 1820

At Colrain April 1820

At Longmeadow August 20 1820

At Springfield September 9 1820

At Deerfield March 1820

At Amherst West Parish March 5 1820?  
At Brattleboro West Parish May 21 1820  
At Waterbury February 1821

At Farmington February 6 1821  
At West Springfield September 1826

At S. Hadley 1820  
At Middleborough 1820  
At Bridgewater N. Parish 1820  
At Worcester 1820

## Sermon 11 Character and Offices of Christ

[Sermon No. 11, "Character and Offices of Christ," Luke 24:30-31, 1820 Mar 28,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 2]

Luke 24:30,37

*And it came to pass as he sat at meat with them he took bread and blessed it,  
and brake and gave to them, And their eyes were opened and they knew him.*

At the age of the world when the profession of Christianity is attended with so little hazard of reputation or life we can form but an imperfect conception of that distressing anxiety and trial of faith experienced by the disciples of Christ during the period between his crucifixion and resurrection. In defiance of Jewish rulers and nation they had forsaken and followed him who would as they supposed restore again the kingdom of Israel. By miracles he performed they were confirmed of the opinion that he had power to effect such a political revolution and Christ did not think proper to undeceive them on this point. But they saw their master yield himself without a struggle into the hands of his enemies. They saw him led to the judgment seat of Pilate and when they expected he would call down fire from heaven to consume all his adversaries - they saw him led forth to be crucified *as a lamb to the slaughter*. Yet perhaps he would display his power on the cross and make the overthrow of his enemies more signal and complete. No, *he bowed his head and gave up the ghost*. Now had his enemies triumphed. And where should his despised and persecuted disciples hide their heads? Ought they to regard Christ as an imposter and his mighty works a deception? No - the spotless purity of life and his numberless deeds of private beneficence which they had witnessed - disproved such a supposition? Ought they to blame them? No: the proof that Christ was the promised Messiah were too numerous to be resisted by an honest mind and they felt that in all their sacrifices they were sincere. What then must they conclude? Christ had indeed given the intimations of his resurrection: but they did not understand them - They could therefore come to no conclusion - nor decide what course of conduct to pursue - They could not however give up all hope though every ground for hope seemed taken away - They met together and reviewed the astonishing events they had witnessed that now appeared to them as a dream. The second day was now finished and yet all was still at the tomb of Jesus - Yet was it sealed - closed by a great stone and encircled by a band of Roman soldiers. All hope seemed now at an end, but pious affection which outlives hope was yet active - and on the morning of the third day those women who had bathed the feet of their living Lord with tears now went to his sepulchre to embalm him dead and lo the soldiers had fled - the stone was rolled away - the body of Jesus was gone and there was a vision of angels. When all this was told by the women to the disciples they were indeed astonished but many of them could not believe that Christ was truly risen: And on the same day two of them went from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. The death and reported resurrection of their Lord as might be expected was the subject of their conversation by the way. And though a ray of hope had burst upon their midnight of darkness and doubt they were yet in suspense - But the hour had arrived when their joy should be full - For Jesus himself drew near and went with them - although their eyes were holden that they should not know him - They knew indeed that they were in the presence of some Superior mind for their hearts burnt within them as he opened to them the Scriptures and showed from the prophets that it was necessary Christ should thus suffer. But when he sat down with them at their table and blessed and broke bread their eyes were opened and they knew him. There was indeed something miraculous both in blinding the eyes of the disciples that they should not know Christ and in opening them to recognize

him - But there was also evidently an allusion to that supper of which Jesus partook with his disciples on the evening of the passover and which he appointed to be observed in his church through all generations. This circumstance was probably the means employed to bring Christ more distinctly to their recollection: For could they ever have forgotten the looks - the attitude and the words of their Master when only the evening before his crucifixion he took the bread and blessed it and gave it to his disciples - and said, *this do in remembrance of me!* And so may still be incensed in a sense be said of the Lord's supper that it is the means in the hands of the Spirit to bring us more intimately acquainted with Christ - At his table does the Christian feel the blindness and darkness which the world and its concerns have brought upon his soul dissipated and he is made to know Christ as his Redeemer as his Exemplar - as his eternal Intercession and as his final judge.

#### 1. He knows him as his Redeemer

Dost thou not feel the need of such a redeemer? Then thou hast no right to a seat at his table. For you have never realized as you ought the sinfulness of your heart and life - nor the holiness justice and excellence of the lamb of God. This last you have broken - for no man liveth and sinneth not - and in what way can you atone for your sins? All your future services are due to God as his reasonable requirement - you cannot then by your repentance and reformation make amends for that law you have broken - and without some atonement rendered by another, you must die: for it is the unvarying and unbending language of this law, *the soul that sinneth it shall die*. Until therefore you realize your exposure to everlasting perdition if left to yourself you cannot know Christ as the *Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*. Your heart is in no proper state to sit down to his table.

But again - Dost thou not believe that Christ is set forth in the bible as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all who trust in him? Then thou dost not believe the bible - I mean the bible which God has given - If you have tortured the language of Scripture till it no longer exhibits the doctrine of atonement you have indeed formed a bible of your own which you may believe but it is no longer the bible that came down from heaven: for it is, *in the words which man's wisdom teacheth*, and not in the words, *which the Holy Ghost teacheth*. It may learn you how to live but it will never teach you how to die. For *other foundation can no man lay, which is Christ Jesus. Neither is their salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*. But how are we saved by Christ? will be the enquiry of him who comes to his table with proper views and feelings. And when he finds it declared in the Scriptures, *that any man saying we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the righteous - and he is the propitiation for our Sins and not for ours only but also for the Sins of the whole world* - When it is there said that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us - that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures - was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification and that this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God - when he reads such passages - and a thousand others as plain - as undisputed and as decisive he must conclude that the atonement of Christ is the processing cause of his salvation. And in an ordinance particularly calculated to commemorate this atonement of Christ as his sacramental supper, the believer will know him as his Redeemer. But neither speculation knowledge nor even a speculative belief of this doctrine constitutes all that is meant by this phrase, *to know Christ*. There must also be an assent of the heart. The man feels that he is in need of such a sacrifice for his sins and truth in it for salvation - And when we partake of the body and blood of Christ and reflect on his great atonement - if we feel no emotion of heart - and examine it merely by an act of the understanding - is there not something wrong? Are our hearts right in the sight of God?

Nor should the Christian at his masters table rest in any general views concerning atonement. He should

look at those sufferings one by one and that obedience which constituted it – he should endeavor to trace Christ from the period when he left the bosom of the father, and descended to the earth, through all the varied scenes of his life in the flesh till he ascended triumphant over death and the grave to the same everlasting throne of glory. And first let him look at his astonishing condescension. In examining the great mystery of godliness I know the mind is in danger of getting bewildered. For in sealing the Scriptures concerning the character of Christ previous to his appearance in the flesh we find ourselves at once directed to the attributes of Jehovah himself - We are called to contemplate that mysterious union of the Father Son and Spirit whereby they exist coequal and coeternal in an undivided substance. We are pointed to Jesus Christ, *the same yesterday today and forever whose name is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God- the Everlasting Father the Prince of Peace - who in the beginning was with God and who was God - who is over all God blessed forever - who is the Alpha and Omega the first and the last - by whom were all things created that are in heaven and that are on earth visible and invisible whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers all things were created by him and for him and he is before all things and by him all things consist.* Such was the character of him *who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross.* And do you not realize O Christian as you surround the table spread to commemorate dying love of the Saviour, that all this condescension was for your sake? *that you through his poverty might become rich?* I know that we can but imperfectly comprehend this wonderful humility of Christ or realize our obligations - for how can that which is finite grasp what is infinite? But we were unpardonable to omit this view of his character when we approached the Lord's table. We were unpardonable not to gather a lesson of humility from so bright a pattern.

Such was the character of Christ until he *was made a little lower than the angels and took on him the seed of Abraham.* The eye of the believer will next follow him through his earthly pilgrimage. And here you have an inhabitant of heaven introduced to the inhabitants of the earth by a voice from God - *this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* With what joy will he be received by men - who were created in the image of God and whose Spirits are formed to dwell forever in heaven. They will welcome him as one coming from their native country to visit them in a strange and distant land - bringing with him all the purity, innocence, and peace of those lovely shores. But how does this description agree with the facts? Look at his fellow citizens of Nazareth dragging him to the top of the hill whereon their city was built that they might cast him down headlong - Observe the Pharisees and Herodians plotting how they might destroy him because he had healed a man on the Sabbath day - Look at the Scribes and Pharisees charging him with casting out devils by Beersheba the princes of devils seeking how they might ensnare him in his words - and endeavoring to lay hands on him that they might destroy him. Here exclaiming, *the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head-* and again to his disciples – *the world cannot hate you: but me it hateth because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil.* Look at Christ betrayed by one of his chosen disciples - delivered into the hands of ruffians sent by the High Priest - brought before Annas Caiaphas as Pilate – smitten spit upon reviled crowned with thorns forsaken and denied by his disciples - condemned by his judges amid the shouts of the people – crucify him crucify him hurried away to Golgotha - nailed to the cross between thieves - even then insulted and offered vinegar and myrrh mingled with gall to drink - and at length giving up his soul into the hands of his God.

Such my brother was the love of the world towards Christ - Such was the reception of that spotless and lamb-like minister of heaven among our fallen alienated race - And do you feel your resentment rising against the cruel Jews? *Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone at them.* It was our sins

my hearers, it was our sins that brought Christ from heaven and subjected him to all this abuse and suffering. For he might at any time have pray to his father, and received twelve legions of angels for his rescue. But how then could the Scriptures have been fulfilled - or how could our sins have been pardoned?

The bodily sufferings of Christ were not however the only distress he endured in the work of redemption. When I hear the Psalmist in the passion of Christ exclaiming, *Lord why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou my face from me?* And when Isaiah says, *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his deed he shall prolong his days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand* - when I hear Jesus saying to the chief priests and captains of the temple - *this is your hour and the power of darkness* - when I view him in the garden of Gethsemane in the immediate view of his suffering *sweating as it were great drops of blood* and praying earnestly thrice that *if it were possible this cup might pass from him* - when I hear all this I cannot suppose that merely his bodily suffering be meant. For many a martyr since the days of Christ has viewed the approaching agonies of a more cruel death with greater fortitude and calmness. And can we suppose that he *who knew no sin* and who had told his disciples *not to fear them who could kill the body and after that could do no more*, would he show less resignation and fortitude in the view of death than in a sinful man? There must have been an agony of mind to produce all these complaints - some arrow of the Almighty piercing his soul - And when I hear Christ on the cross exclaiming - *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* I think I perceive what this agony was - God hid his face from him - He withdrew the tokens of his approbation of his character. He departed him for a reason as one who had taken upon him the sins of the world. No wonder then that, *his Soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death - that he was in agony and that he cried out My God my God why hast thou forsaken me?*

Nor did the sufferings of Christ bodily and mental constitute the whole of his atonement. The Christian should also look to his active obedience as an essential part of the great works. Without such obedience he could not have secured the reward of believers. And if it was necessary on the one hand that Christ should suffer for him to exhibit to the universe God's hatred of it - so on the other hand was it necessary for him to show by his obedience that the law of God was *holy just and good*- that God had a complacency in it and that its requirements are not impracticable.

In the second place I remark that the disciple of Christ at his communion table will know him as his Exemplar or Pattern of imitation.

You have already seen the reception which Christ met from the world - and had he possessed the Spirit of the world you might expect to find him going about to devise plans for taking vengeance on his enemies. You might hear him in secret stirring up the resentment of his followers and making ready the implements of war. You would see him desolating Judea with fire and sword calling down fire from heaven and laying Jerusalem on heaps. But neither his Spirit nor his kingdom were of this world. This was the Spirit of heaven - his was this kingdom of heaven. And notwithstanding all the insults and cruelty of the Jews toward him, he continually went about doing good - instead of destroying his enemies who were entirely in his power he healed their sick - instead of cursing them in secret he prayed for them - instead of stirring up his disciples to revenge his wrongs he rebuked them for desiring fire from heaven in his defense. He taught them to love their enemies - and to pray for them. He wept over Jerusalem the city of his enemies. And to give a finishing to the picture of his obedience, when his enemies had nailed him to the cross and had mocked and insulted him till mere human patience must have failed - even then in that hour of agony he said, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*

This my brethren is the exemplar we are commanded to follow. Does not our heart fail us at the thought and do we not cry, *who is sufficient for these things?* And when we compare our lives with that of Christ as we surround his sacramental table do we not in deep abasement of soul cry out, *unclean, unclean, God be merciful to me a sinner?* And in particular with the example of Christ before us can we come to this table and sit down with those who have injured us without forgiving them and praying for them? O, if we go away from the table with feelings of resentment towards anyone, *we have eaten and drank damnation to ourselves.*

In the third place the believer will know Christ at his table as his everlasting Intercessor.

Notwithstanding all that Christ has done for sinners during his incarnation so pure are God's laws and character that even believers might look to him in vain for the pardon of their transgressions were there not an intercession before the throne to quench the kindlings of Divine Justice. In what way Christ executes this merciful office - it may be difficult to determine whether by presenting continually his human nature before God or by actually pleading with the Father on our behalf or by both. Yet the fact is certain that, *he ever liveth to make intercession for us - and that we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* And therefore as the apostle justly argues, *we may come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* The idea of standing naked and unshielded before the *holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty* is too appalling to that man who has a just conception of his sins. We must despair of ever turning our eyes upon this God and live, unless there were a friend there to veil in a measure the glories of his character and to stand as a *day's man* between us. This friend having shrouded his divinity in a human form, stands in the only passage from earth to heaven and no sincere prayer or holy wish however feeble is by him unheard or disregarded; but is presented to Jehovah with all the pleading eloquence of infinite compassion.

In the last place the believer at the Lord's table knows him as his final Judge.

Hitherto you have contemplated Christ in his merciful attributes and offices. But you should also look forward to that hour when dispensations of mercy shall be closed and Justice once more ascend the tribunal of the universe. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained. *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* But it is the ground on which judgment will proceed - at which the believer is most concerned to look. And the bible informs us that we shall be judged according to our works - according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or whether they be evil: And the sentence will be given accordingly - there will be no evasion - no mediator nor intercessor for the impenitent. For He is changed into our our judge - a merciful one indeed to those who have put their trust in him - but deaf to the cry of those who sought him not while the days of salvation lasted. And my brethren when we bring our conduct to the test of this rule which will regulate the decisions of the final judgment - how do we find ourselves? Do our works condemn us or acquit us? What if instead of surrounding the sacramental table before us, we should be summoned to hasten to the judgment seat of Christ! Should we be permitted to commemorate our Savior's dying love this day - such questions as these, urged upon our hearts with sincerity and solemnity, should form a part of that commemoration. And it may be if we have never known Christ before he may reveal himself to us at this time. The disciples who went to Emmaus knew him not while he went with them on the way: but in the breaking of bread was it made known unto them their Lord and their God.

I have called the head of discourse just discussed the last. But may I not add another? May I not say that when the Christian communes at the in table of his Lord he knows the Christ as his everlasting friend? In other words has he not then the faith of assurance? Were my own experience to decide this I must freely own that such kindness or such faith is not mine not - But who looks round upon this congregation and church - do catch the eye of some venerable father in Christ and is ready to say with Paul, *I have fought a good fight - I have kept the faith - henceforth there is laid upon me a crown of righteousness - For me to live is Christ; to die is gain - For I know that I have passed from death unto life.* If there be such an one present he must be a man who early enlisted on the Lord's side under the baptism of his salvation - and who has grown gray in fighting the battles of faith. To such an one it would be presumption in us who are young to offer advice but we would be bold to ask it. We long to know by what resolutions - by what prayers - by what trials - by what mortifications of the flesh or spirit or by what services in the cause of Christ you have reached this enviable point in the Christian race. And should we surmise, in this world we long to catch your falling mantle as you are carried up by a chariot of fire into heaven.

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*[The following paragraph was written on a small slip of paper that was folded and place in page 2 of the scanned images.]*

But if Christ made no manifestation of himself to us at his table - if we have then no realizing sense of his character either as Redeemer - or Exemplar - or Intercessor - and if this insensibility remain till many communions have gone by there is reason to fear that the light of his countenance will not be shed upon us in this world and that we are eating and drinking damnation to ourselves - There is reason to fear the first manifestation we shall have of Christ will be in the flaming fire - and the only words we shall hear from his lips will be depart ye cursed unto everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.

Delivered

At Conway March 2 1820

At Conway March 1824

At Brattleboro East Parish May 5 1820

At Marlborough VT June 8<sup>th</sup> 1820

At Springfield (M. Osgood Soc.) August? or September 1 1820

At Enfield Connecticut August 3 1820

At Deerfield May 1821

At Ashfield June 1821



## Sermon 13 Opposition to Religion

[Sermon No. 13, "Opposition to Religion," Acts 7:51, 1820,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 3]

Acts 7:51

*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*

So powerful and so correct in her decisions is conscience that few persons are in danger of mistaking the true nature of sin when it presents itself in any of its grosser forms. Does a man violate the rules of morality or openly oppose religion – he knows - he feels that he is doing contrary to the will of God notwithstanding this a man may live three score years and ten in a state of rebellion against God and active warfare with heaven and be ignorant of it - nay he may suppose himself doing God's service. While he feels indignant at any palpable transgressions of morality or of decency he cannot be made to realize that his heart daily resists the influences of the Spirit of God there is a long and bitter controversy between him and heaven. Yet my hearers this is no uncommon character. It is to be found among the most learned and refined and amiable of our race. Many a man's heart is the field where a battle is fought daily between him and his Maker - and yet that man is ignorant of any such contest.

Does this appear to any an assertion paradoxical and extravagant? Difficult as may seem the task we shall attempt this day to prove it. And we are going to draw upon our own experience for this proof. In other words I propose to exhibit some of the principal modes in which opposition to God manifests itself in the man who is apparently moral and who is respectable in the eye of the world whose heart is in reality destitute of holiness, having never been regenerated and in this state which of us has been or shall be. And what I want is that you should accompany me in your own hearts and examine them soberly and keenly and should you unexpectedly find a hatred or indifference to God to lie at the bottom of your affections do not close your eyes to the evidence of its existence nor be offended should we strip off the veil that now conceals it from you. For the discovery would be the most important a man can possibly make and your worst enemy is the man who would flatter you no such hatred is rooted in your heart. If we dissemble concerning every other subject here we should be plain.

It may be profitable in the introduction of this discourse to remark that if a man perform actions ever so useful to his fellow man - ever so praiseworthy in the view of the world - if he feed the poor clothe the naked - protects the injured - advise the weaker - even give his body to be burned as a martyr in the cause of his country - if he do all this without a reference to God - without regard to his will - if he do it merely through the influence of natural compassion or a regard to man - he has no evidence in all these deeds that he possesses moral virtue or holiness. For in order to render any act morally good in the sight of God it is necessary that the desire to please him be the motive that prompts to its performance. The deeds that have been named may indeed be virtuous and right and laudable in the view of men - but they may be performed by a being totally hostile to God - because the man does not even enquire whether there be any such Being. And indeed were He not in existence these actions would remain the same in every respect. They therefore cannot prove holiness to exist in the heart.

This distinction between our actions as stated at this time because it may illustrate some of the principles of this discourse and because an ignorance of it is frequently the root of self-delusion in

regard to religion. Let us now proceed to describe some of the exercises and sentiments of many a man who is yet unconverted that prove the man possessed of them to be an enemy of God – an enemy of religion and a resister of the Holy Spirit.

It is not necessary as has already been observed to exhibit those gross exercises heart and opinions of mind that mask the man to be far gone in iniquity and opposed not only to religion but to worldly morality - For no man can mistake such characters. I wish this day to point out those exercises which the man who experiences them does not regard as any evidence of his hostility to God. I mean to come up nearer the line that separates the religious from irreligious part of society and to show many who regard themselves as not far from the kingdom of heaven that they are yet in their sins - and that between them and God there is yet a great gulf. And we shall consider this exercise and sentiments.

1. As they relate to the doctrines of the Gospel and
2. As they relate to experimental religion.

It may be thought necessary in discussing the first head of this division that it should previously be proved what are the precise documents necessary to be believed by every man in order to salvation. I shall however suppose only that ~~the man whom I address~~ we all acknowledge that *all scriptures both the old and new testaments is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*. If we assent to this truth and very few will deny it and this present day we shall not object to arguments drawn from the bible. Now we will suppose we have long sat under the ministry of a man who has made great use of the phraseology of the New Testament in his public instructions. With this minister regeneration - and faith - and grace - and sanctification and adoption are familiar terms. And he talks also of being born again of water and of the Spirit - of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost of living to the glory of God – of exercising fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ of growing up unto Christ and of beholding with open face his glory so as, *to be changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord*. And what if this presenter in the very language of Scripture call upon you to, *make you a new heart and a new spirit?* What if he tell you that, *except a man be born of water in the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven - that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away: old all things are passed away: behold all things are become new - that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked – that there is none that understandeth - there is none that serveth after God - they are all gone out of the way - that in us that is in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned – that every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually*.

What if he addressed Christians as those who, *have been born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God - who are saved by grace through faith and that not of themselves - it is the gift of God who are saved not by works of righteousness which they have done but according to the mercy of God by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost – who are justified freely by grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus - who are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world - God having predestined them unto the adoption of children of Jesus Christ unto himself according to the good pleasure of his will?* If such be the burthen of that man's preaching we while unregenerate looks upon as an enthusiast - as a dealer in mysteries. Even while we are listening to his discourse you feel rising of heart against the doctrine. You enquire why he does not preach practical discourse and let these mysteries alone? And how is it with our feelings where we go from the house of God? Were you to resort directly to the word of God to examine whether these things were so all would

be well. But you are in no mood for it. And although much of the sermon you have just heard was extracted from the bible, yet you feel that such doctrines as depravity and regeneration are too absurd to doubt a moment about them. Reason without revelation appears to you sufficient to prove them utterly false. And when you have retired to your own dwelling are generally ready to give vent to your feelings in language not very becoming on such an important subject. Perhaps you will also heap abuse upon those men who are weak enough to believe in such absurdities - although you know that many great men and many good men have manifested the firmest faith in these apparent mysteries. It is not my business indeed at this time to endeavor to give the proofs of these doctrines: but there are several facts which show that your disbelief of them does not result from a conviction of your understanding that they are false - but from a native opposition of your heart to any principles so humbling to pride.

And first - did the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel appear to your understanding so perfectly absurd as you suppose your feelings when we hear them from the pulpit or converse upon them would not be so violently agitated as they are. You would rather pity than censure those who had embraced them and you would be disposed to convince them of their error by directing them to the Scriptures. And being firmly established yourself in the true doctrines of revelation you would fear no overthrow. This violence of yours shows that your conscience is disposed to listen to these mysteries while your heart opposes them, thus producing a content in your bosom.

In the second place the same thing is evident from the fact that you do not go to the Scriptures to prove from them the absurdity of these doctrines. That man who has a just sense of his liability to err when left to himself and who believes the Scriptures to be the word of God, will at least be disposed to examine them upon every question in religion to see whether they agree with the decisions of his own reason. And therefore if a man does not take this course it must be because he has an overwhelming conceit of his own superiority or his heart is opposed to it - and fears conviction.

In the last place the same thing is evident from the fact that in forming your system of religious belief if you have ever formed one you did not read the Scriptures with prayer. When reading such passages as have been mentioned above you did not look up to God and with a sense of your own weakness and ignorance cry out with the Psalmist, *Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law*. You passed by these passages, concluding if they meant any thing it was some mystery you could not - and it was of no consequence you should understand. Now you will have acknowledged that, *all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* and you will not dispute that there are many texts in the bible hard to be understood concerning which men of the strongest minds have disagreed. You must also acknowledge that, *if any man lack wisdom he may ask it of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him*. Why then, with all these truths before you did you not pray to God that he would enlighten your understanding to understand the difficult parts of his word? Was not this the reason - that you had formed your system of belief before you came to the bible and did not feel the need of direction from God? There then the opposition of your heart to the doctrines of the Gospel and to the strivings of the Holy Spirit was manifested through you. Suppose all this resulted from a conviction of your understanding - that those doctrines were false.

Thus it is evident without enquiry whether the doctrines of grace as they are infrequently called be true or false, that your opposition to them results from a sense of rooted opposition in your heart to all revealed religion. Whenever you shall have felt your need of divine assistance to understand the bible and having resigned all confidence in the glosses and expositions of men you shall have read the whole New Testament praying over each chapter - then, but not till then, will it be manifest that you have

given up this opposition and have come to learn of Christ and that your doubts if any still remain are sincere. Do you feel opposed to such a course of proceeding? It is not because you are unwilling to read the Scriptures: but it is the word prayer that is the stumbling block. You would even consent to commit the whole New Testament to memory: but to pray over it - to pray in secret - to pray in secret daily - and that sincerity too - here is the difficulty.

But I trespass upon the second head of this discourse which is to exhibit some of the exercises and sentiments of your heart as it relates to experiment experimental religion.

There is no man who has not a strong natural inclination to adopt some system of religion. There is no one who does not at times feel the need of it - were men permitted to be religious in their own way - could they bend the will of God at their pleasure - no sacrifices would be too great for them in receiving future happiness. But when they find only one strait and narrow path to heaven - only one name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved - *only one lord one faith one baptism* - when they find that God must be loved with all the heart and mind and strength that they must be crucified to the Lord and henceforth live to the to the Lord that bought them - this is a system too mortifying for human nature to adopt. Human nature therefore will endeavor to rob this system of its peculiarities and to shorten the standard God has established till it is brought down to the measure of a man. Then when the Gospel can be embraced without sacrificing the world or wounding the pride you will find men pressing into the Kingdom of heaven. But alas for deluded mortals!

*God never made his works for man to amend.* If he will not humble to accept of salvation on God's terms even through faith in Jesus Christ and the renewing of the Holy Spirit the law of God stands out in all its strict and unbending rigor against him and there is no arm that can avert its thunders. Now we while in a natural state are not unwilling to receive the Gospel after it has been modified so as to suit his taste. Like Naaman, if he can be made clean by washing in Abana or Pharpar he does not object but rather than wash in the contemptible Jordan in that fountain set open *to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin; and for uncleanness* he will retain the foul leprosy that is upon him. I have already exhibited how some marks of his opposition to genuine religion manifested in his resistance to its doctrines. Let us now look at the state of our hearts naturally in regard to the practice of piety.

And first your opposition is manifested by your feelings when hearing the preached word. If the minister of the Gospel dwell upon its doctrines you blame him for not bringing forward practical subjects. Perhaps the next Sabbath he calls upon you to repent of your sins - to break off from them - to instruct your family in religion - to pray in your family - to pray in secret - to devote all your faculties of body and mind to the service of the Lord and whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do to do all to the glory of God. Now you know that in most or all these respects you are deficient - and how do you get rid of applying such a sermon to yourself? For you will acknowledge that such duties are required in the bible. There is perhaps in your heart feeling of resentment against the man who is thus faithful and playing in exhibiting your duty - or you could conjure up the idea that his sermon is personal although he disclaims it - or you try to persuade yourself that he is unnecessarily rigid in his requirements - or you try to turn off your thoughts to some other subject - or in short you do any thing to shield yourself from these arrows which his sermon is fixing in your conscience. The spirit is indeed striving with you not to suffer such an opportunity to pass unimproved - but you resist all his influences and cover yourself as soon as possible with the impenetrable armor of the Lord.

You may reply to all this that there are some subjects which you like to hear discussed in the pulpit. Yes and it is easy to point out what these subjects are. Let the preacher expatiate upon any of the moral duties - let him muster all his eloquence and pour forth all his zeal against stealing and lying and fraud slander and intemperance - or let him show up in glowing language the particular attributes of God or describe the sufferings of Christ or the joys of heaven as you can listen very complacently to all this because there is little in it to disturb your conscience. But here is no evidence of your love to religion. The touchstone is not applied until you are called upon to make some painful sacrifice - to cut off a right hand or pluck out a right eye.

In the second place your feelings toward devoted Christians afford evidence of hostility to religion. The apostle John makes love to the brethren one of the strongest evidences that we are Christians - *We know says he that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.* Now let me ask are your feelings towards professors of religion or if you are yourself a professor towards an eminently devoted Christian such as you should call love? Do you not on the other hand regard him as one who is over much righteous - and are not his presence and conversations an offence to you? Do you not feel something like an aversion to him and take pleasure in pointing out his failings? And do you not receive more pleasure in the society of the man who is upright in his dealings - firm in his integrity and delicate in his honor and winning in his address but who makes no pretensions to the character of a religious man?

You complain of this devoted servant of Christ that he is too apt to converse upon religion at all times - that he makes it too public and common a thing: whereas you conceive religion to be between the man and his Maker and that it is not advisable to say much concerning the practical part of it except before your particular friends. But do you introduce it frequently before your particular friends and do you make it a matter between your own soul in heaven? Does not the world occupy more of your thoughts and does not a short prayer once or twice in the day (if you pray it all) constitute all your intercourse with God? Is secret prayer a common - a daily and a pleasant service? Until you can answer these questions in the affirmative, blame not the boldness of the man who derives his courage from his secret intercourse with the Father of Spirits and who like Paul in Athens feels his spirit stirred within him when he sees the worldly wholly given to idolatry.

You complain of this man because he encourages by his commendation and example religious meetings at other times than on the Sabbath for prayer and praise and mutual improvement. And the objection you make to such meetings is that they appear ostentatious and if you wish to pray for the conversion of sinners and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom we may do it in our closets and if we wish to improve in religion we can read the bible. Now is not my intention in this place to bring forward arguments for such social religious meetings - but a simple statement of facts will show that your professed objections to them are not your real ones. You say it is better to go into our closets and spend a portion of time there in reading and prayer. Why then do you not do it? When you shall set apart one or two evenings each week to be spend in this manner, you can consistently objective to public meetings - but since you adopt no such course, is it not fair to conclude that your objections lie deeper than you suppose - that they proceed from a want of relish for the subjects of religion? Compare your conduct in other respects with what is in regard to this subject. You do not object to spending even several evenings in the week paying visits or in a society of friends for acquiring human knowledge - and why? Because you have a relish for such visits in such society. If then you have a relish for religion why should you not be pleased with spending a few hours *out of season* in improving yourself in its doctrines and practice?

But you reply to all this by saying that such meetings tend to produce enthusiasm and of all enemies of religion this is the most deadly. Without stopping to enquire whether this charge be well-founded it will reach the bottom of the objection at once to observe that while you are in constant fear of enthusiasm you never fear coldness in religion. While you clothe the former in all its terrific dress - and put into its right hand a bloody sword and in its left a fiery faggot and surround it with a thousand furies and let it loose among God's heritage to trample it underfoot and burn his sanctuary - during all this time the thought of indifference in religion does not once enter your heart - And why? Is it not because you imagine yourself to be *rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing - and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked?* Is not the New Testament full of exhortations to grow in grace - to watch and pray? Does it not declare lukewarmness in religion to be more hateful in the sight of God than opposition? And how few denunciations does it contain against excessive zeal! I am not indeed contending that there is no such thing as enthusiasm. But these facts prove that the writers of the bible knew men to be in greater danger of becoming stupid in religion than of being overzealous. And when you find that in your mind there exists something the reverse of this does it not excite a suspicion that your heart is not right in the sight of God?

In the last place your hostility to religion is manifested by your feelings in regard to the conversion of sinners and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. When you meet with one wanted this world's most amiable characters and observe his lofty accomplishments of mind and his fine feelings of honor and integrity - you do not feel and lament that he yet lacketh one thing. He appears to you to possess everything desirable although his heart knows not God and he is every moment exposed notwithstanding all his fine qualities, to sink into everlasting perdition. And did you realize this you would pity him and pray that he might be saved from that place of torment.

In regard to missionary exertions also you consider most of them as visionary and enthusiastic. You are willing however to acknowledge such exertions are proper when directed to right objects - but you conceive it to be wrong to send missionaries to foreign countries. And why is it wrong? Because they are so much needed in our own land. Let it be remembered that I am not here endeavoring to prove the utility of foreign missions: But there is one fact that proves the argument you have advanced against foreign missions to be a mere subtlety of your heart to deceive your understanding - you acknowledge the high importance of domestic missions - indeed you profess to believe that all the efforts of the Christians should be directed to this object - and yet you do not lift a finger nor contribute a mite for this purpose! Does not this fact open your eyes to perceive that all your objections proceed from an opposing heart?

It were easy to multiply instances of our national hostility to religion but let those already exhibited suffice. And now what shall I say in conclusion on this discourse? Shall I say that I have been speaking to any person? See that I know concerning this and all is necessary for me to know, is that such feelings exist somewhere in the world in the human heart. Whether they exist in this house let every man's conscience answer: for there is no difficulty in deciding whether I have been tracing your feelings. If anyone reply in the affirmative we naturally enquire what will be the effect of this exhibition upon his heart? It may be answered that his opposition to religion is excited and is now swelling in his breast: And unless the Spirit of God be poured out upon him to subdue that opposition - this discourse has been read in vain. In vain did I say? No - feeble and imperfect as it is, it may be the last warning he shall ever hear. It may be the means of hardening his heart and rendering him a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction. It may seal up his doom to the judgment day.

Delivered  
At Shelburne 1820  
At Colrain 1820

## Sermon 15 Religious Condition of the United States

[Sermon No. 15, "Religious Condition of the United States," II Chronicles 28:10, 1820 Apr, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 3]

II Chronicles 28:10

*But are there not with you even with you, sins against the Lord your God?*

*[Includes a discussion of slavery and how every citizen bears some responsibility.]*

Prosperity is as dangerous to the spiritual health of society and nations as to that of individuals. Strange as it may seem, it is true, that the more a man receives of the mercies of heaven the more inclined is he to forget the source whence they flow. If a society or nation be eminently prosperous, it is apt to impute its happy state to its own superior wisdom and prudence: or if it be a professedly religious state, to its greater piety, which renders it a peculiar object of the Divine beneficence. And where such an impression exists on the minds of the people we are almost sure to find but few efforts to root out remaining corruption - and vice will secretly spread through the community. For society can no more be stationary in respect of morality and religion than an individual. It is ever becoming better or worse. And when any people regard themselves as the peculiar favorites of heaven, they will relax in their virtuous exertions - until sin has completely closed their eyes to their moral danger and they are insensibly conducted to perdition. A more striking example of this moral blindness cannot be found than the Jewish nation. They boasted that they had Abraham for their father and that unto them were committed the oracles of God. They could point back to the numberless interpositions of God in behalf of their nation - as a triumphant proof of his peculiar regard. And in the time of Christ this destructive, self-appropriating spirit was at its height. The religion of the heart was almost unknown and yet the Jews regarded themselves as the only children of God on earth, looking upon all other nations with contempt. But Christ who regarded not the persons or professions of men, who looked on the heart knew what was in man, denominated the Jews at the time of his appearance, *a faithless a perverse and an adulterous generation - a generation of vipers*. And while they expected daily that their superior piety would call forth some signal manifestations of the Divine displeasure against their enemies, Christ forewarned them that their sins had risen to such a height of enormity that the wrath of God would soon be revealed from heaven for their destruction.

And is there no danger of falling into a regard to our spiritual state the present day? We live in what is called a Christian land and in a part of that land long celebrated for its moral and religious habits. As a nation we have been unusually prosperous and happy. And when we look about upon other countries and see a part of them sunk in the lowest ignorance brutality and iniquity - and a part yet smoking with blood spilt in the most obstinate wars that ever desolated the world do we not look upon our own land with complacency as pure and religious in comparison with others? While the iniquities of foreign lands rise up before us in such aggravated and tremendous colors and awful magnitude, do we not lose sight of those whose every day commission before our eyes has taught us to regard with comparatively little



abhorrence?

It is well then my brethren that we are called upon this day by the example of our fathers and the voice of our rulers to turn our thoughts homeward - to leave other countries and look upon our own comparing our moral and religious state with the requisitions of Jehovah and enquiring whether there be not with us even lined against the Lord and God.

It is my intention at this time to set in order some of those more palpable sins which are a disgrace to any nation in which are found in the midst of us provoking the judgments of God upon the land.

In entering upon this subject, it will be proper to lay down a standard to which every action may be referred. And this standard is the law of God delivered among the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai. To the ten commandments we shall appeal as the groundwork of all our observations.

The first of these commandments lies at the foundation of the whole: *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* That is as Christ explains it, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.* Here is a law sacredly binding upon every child of Adam - a law that comes to us enforced by the researcher of reason and the sanctions of revelation - a law that extends to every thought, word and action - a law that fastens its broad requirements upon every faculty of soul and body and which no authority can annul. Now we will suppose a being who is a stranger to our species to go through this land for the sole purpose of determining how far the conduct of its inhabitants coincides with this law which is holy, just and good.

We will suppose this being first to enter those temples erected among us for the worship of God. And here will he see mighty congregations bowing in sacred silence while the voice of prayer rises from the desk in the name of a Mediator. But where are the thoughts and affections of these apparent solemn worshippers? It is a hard judgment to say that one half of them are turned entirely away from God and fixed on the pursuits or the pleasures of this world? Do you say this is a hard judgment? Let it be announced that the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated and let his disciples be invited to tarry and hold communion with God and with his son Jesus Christ. How small is the number of those who remain to pay even this small testimony to the boundless love of their Savior. And how large the multitude that goeth away and *careth for none of these things.*

Here then at the outset will our imaginary visitor be compelled to note in his registry this unwelcome fact - *A majority of this people do not love God.* Yet this exhibition was the most favorable he could have. This people have appeared to him in their best aspect. For if the love of God ever manifest itself among them must be on the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is now closed and the uproar of the world assails the ears of this stranger. He perceives that man is now engaged in pursuits that he loves and he goes forth to see whether the love of God be mingled with those pursuits and whether it be the exciting cause of all this activity.

The love of God! Let him go through our land from Dan to Beersheba and except on the Sabbath where will he find any visible manifestation of it among the inhabitants? I mean if he looks at their general sublime(?)conduct. Let him judge from such a view and he would be forced to conclude that this world in their estimation to be all in all.

The love of God? What if he look for it among those who are called men of business? Here he would see a constant bustle and effort in pursuit of some object. He would perceive much correspondences, much conversation and much earnest argument. But were he told that a man cannot serve God and Mammon could he doubt which master such man were serving?

Or let this love be sought in the ordinary dealings between men. Says the scripture, *If any man say I love God and hateth his brother he is a liar*. Now what stronger evidence do we wish that a man hates his brother than that he should endeavor to deceive him in a bargain – or refuse to believe him in distress – or manifest envy at his prosperity or treat his feelings and reputation with contempt or take advantage of his misfortunes to oppress him? And is it not the fact that every man must stand continuously upon his guard or he is very sure to suffer some of these evils? Does this look like a manifestation of the love of God?

Shall this stranger look for evidence of love to God in those amusements so greedily sought after by the majority? One of the most natural expressions of this love is in prayer. But does the glutton ever pray when he is most vilely wasting the bounties of heaven and stupefying his immortal soul? And is the hall of the pleasure party or the gaming party or of the dancing assembly or the theater or the field of the horse race – are these places where prayer is want to be made? So far from it that were prayer introduced all these places would soon be deserted.

Should this impartial stranger then look for evidence of love to God to any of the men or the places that have been named and he could not avoid them where he in the world! He would look in vain. He would find in them all a worshiping of the creature more than the creator. He would find an idol in the place of God. Among the avaricious this would be riches – among the ambitious it would be honor and among the sensual it would be pleasure. But whatever it might be he would uniformly find it in opposition to God and possessing the undivided empire of the heart.

The question then again recurs where in our external weekly conduct shall this stranger find evidence that we are a nation devoted to the Lord? You dare not point him to the haunts of dissipation and licensed profligacy. For on the doors thereof is marked in letters of fire – *this house is the way to hell going down to the chambers of death*. Yet my brethren, he would find cause for placing this inscription upon many a door in our land.

Nor would you direct him to the numberless dwellings amongst us that are never sanctified by family prayer. There might indeed be quick Christians in such dwellings, but to say the least their omission of this duty could be no proof of it.

Neither would you address as a proof of our national piety, the numerous local and general contentions among our churches. For though many of these contentions may be unavoidable yet their existence among the professors of a religion that has but one Lord, one faith, one baptism evinces that there is somewhere a deficiency of love to God.

But perhaps the funeral bell would summon you to attend the burial of the dead – and thither would you lead this stranger. And here indeed would he witness and universal solemnity – a silence of every tumultuous passion and a fine attention to the momentous lesson there to be learnt. Thus far would the judgment be favorable. But when he saw this whole assembly go away, the one to his farm and the other to his merchandise and engage in the business the pleasures and the vanities of the world with as much eagerness as much contention and as much security as ever – would he not exclaim, *the heart of*

*thy people is deceitful above all things!*

It might happen also that during the week the bell for public social prayer would be sounded - and here would you direct the stranger. And whom should he find assembled? Christian charity would answer a few devoted servants of the Lord. But the great majority would say - a few deluded fanatics. Here then might something of an estimate be formed of the relish among the people for religion during the week.

The many societies in the land for extending the knowledge of the Holy Scripture at home and abroad might indeed be pointed out as some evidence of an extensive and operative love to God in our nation. But when we consider how immense is the majority and some of these even professing Christians - who have neither part nor lot in this matter, nay who oppose it ought it not rather to be said that these institutions are an evidence of individual not of national piety?

It might also occur to the observation of this stranger that there is in our land a general acknowledgment of the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures and but few open infidels. And it might be mentioned to him in addition to this that a few years since the reverse of this was a fact. But would he not likewise observe that there is something nearly as bad in the place of infidelity - namely a form of godliness without the power? Yes, my brethren, there is an increasing tendency in our land to unite two things which God has forever disjoined - the love of the world and the love of religion. There is a disposition to lop off the peculiarities of the Christian faith, to blot out the vigorous line of distinction the Bible has drawn between the men of the world and the men of God and to lower down Christianity till it can be embraced within unhumbled and unconverted heart - till God and Mammon can both be acceptably served and till the world can be grasped with one hand and heaven with the other. Infidelity has indeed quit its hold on the understandings of men but over many a heart yet maintains its empire. In this day of light and knowledge very few are handy enough to say that the Bible is a cunningly devised fable. And yet in many instances to what does this acknowledgment of its divinity amount? It is made a standard only so far as it agrees with the previous decisions of reason - and where mystery begins its authority ends. What is this but infidelity in another form?

Let now this imaginary inspector of our conduct bring the several facts in review in order to form a judgment of our national devotion to the Lord. In the very outset of his examination he had been compelled to conclude that a majority of the people do not love God: And when afterwards he found so many palpable manifestations among us of a settled hatred to God - and to so little conformity to His will even among those who profess to be his servants and reflected also that there is much of the form of godliness without its power, what a seduction must he make in this minority! Would he not conclude it most false and absurd to call this nation a religious nation when so very few among us give evidence of their piety, while the multitude are walking each after the counsel of his own heart and in the sight of his own eyes fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life? While an overwhelming majority of this people worship and serve the creature more than the Creator and only one be found here and there whose treasures it is in heaven why is not this strictly and properly a heathen land? Did it confer upon Rome and Corinth the title of religious cities because they contain within their walls a few devoted servants of the Redeemer?

It might indeed startle us to be called a heathen nation when we have been so much accustomed to look at the bright side of our public character and to flatter ourselves with our many privileges and excellences: but the question is what would be the judgment of this impartial uninterested stranger? Surely he would call things by their right names - and when he saw the great mass of our inhabitants living without God would he not call this heathenism?

There would however be other striking proofs of our alienation from God besides those already named: And these would be consistent violations of the other commandments of the decalogue. The second indeed forbidding the worship of graven images is not infringed and would I could say as much of the third – *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!* One might suppose that it were sinful enough to make no return of love or gratitude to that Being who upholds us and watches over us with so tender a care. Why must we add open insult to this neglect? using the name of this God is a bye word? Although profanity be a sin so wanton and unnecessary - so opposite not only to the Bible but to reason - and so repugnant even to decency and good manners yet it is more common among us than prayer. Men do indeed frequently restrain themselves from the utterance of oaths when in the presence of those whom they regard as Christians. But look at them when associated with those of their own stamp - when reveling at the Tavern or the dram shop, or when their anger is suddenly excited – nay, worse than all look at them in their own humility - before their household - before their children - and you will find the tongue of blasphemy unloosed. Yes and are not the ears of the traveler as he passes our streets greeted with oaths poured forth by children of a span long? O it is with us as it once was in Judea - *because of swearing the land mourneth.*

And what shall I say of the fourth commandment – *remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?* I will not point you to those parts of our land where this day is devoted to amusement and sensual pleasures when the doors of iniquity are thrown wide open - I will not call you to listen to the noise of the passing traveler at noon day who cannot be molested by the civil law: But look into your own dwellings: And do you not find that there is a relaxation in the observance of this day? Is there not more mixing of worldly thoughts and actions with everything that relates to this day than in the times of your fathers? Are your children and domestics as faithfully taught religious principles as you were by your parents? Do you not look upon your fathers as bigoted in their observance of the Sabbath? Are you as scrupulous in attending public worship as they were – and in the choice of your reading on that holy day? Do not the questions put long since by the prophets sometimes describe your feelings? *When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small as the shekel great and falsifying the balances of deceit?* O there is too much evidence of a falling off in the observance of this sacred day – *And shall not the land tremble for this and every one mourn that dwelleth therein?*

In passing the fifth commandment, *honor thy father and they mother*, I shall not stop to notice an increasing pettiness and want of respect for the aged among our youth – nor under the ninth commandment, *thou shalt not kill*, shall I pause to repeat any thing upon the exhausted subject of dueling – nor under the seventh commandment, *thou shalt not commit adultery*, shall I point to the increasing haunts of profligacy and licentiousness that threaten to make our land one universal Sodom and to call down a tempest of fire and brimstone from heaven. But the eighth commandment, *thou shalt not steal*, cannot in conscience be passed over by any professed preacher of morality or religion while he knows himself to be a member of that nation which contains within its bosom more than a million of human beings that have been stolen and enslaved. This is a fact, my hearers, that ought to freeze the blood of this nation. The existence of slavery in a land of tyranny is to be expected – in a land of monarchy it might be endured but in a free country it is intolerable – it is an abomination of desolations standing where it ought not. Its enormity will never be known until we stand as a nation around that tribunal in heaven where the blood of these poor murdered beings will be demanded at our hands - For the mighty ocean of their blood will go before us to judgment and for every drop of it will there be poured out in equal measure of God's wrath.

I know that as individuals we are not chargeable with this sin - but as members of this nation can we say that we are free from the blood of these innocent men? Have we not in some way lent our assistance in the bloody work? Or have we done all in our power to prevent it? If we do not suffer for the sin in another world, there is every probability that God will visit His iniquity upon us in this life as a part of this nation and upon our children to the third and fourth generation. At least there is a cup of God's indignation filled to the brim, that must be drank to the dregs in time or eternity for this outrageous abomination.

Were there time to point out the many violations of the ninth amendment – *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbors*, we might enlarge upon the vile sins of falsehood and slander. And under the tenth commandment, *Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's*, might be named a wide spreading and destructive spirit of avarice and ambition. But the catalog of our prevailing transgressions has already been extended far enough to show us that the land which is full of the goodness of the Lord is nevertheless defiled and daily provokes the judgment of heaven upon it. And now in view of all these iniquities shall we not humble ourselves this day in the presence of God? Shall we not *sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of us*? Oh what ungrateful returns have we made to our heavenly father for all the manifestations of his goodness to us - for electing us to heaven in point of privileges? Let us remember that as members of this nation we are accountable for its sins if we have been guilty of the like sins ourselves or have winked at them in others - or have not done our utmost to prevent them. So long as it was in the power of Pilate to have released Christ, it did not free him from the sin of his minder to wash his hands before the people and declare himself innocent of the blood of that just person. So neither shall we be free from partaking in other men's sins unless we stand forth fearlessly and do all in our power to oppose them. And it is only by humiliation's, repentance, prayer and active exertions in the cause of religion ~~that we can hope to avert the righteous judgments of God upon our land. These and these only~~ can stand like Phineas of old between the plague and the people away the wrath of an holy God.

Delivered

At Greenfield Fast day April 1820

At Shelburne Fast day April 1821

At Conway Fast day April 1822

## Sermon 16 Sins of Omission and Commission

[Sermon No. 16, "Sins of Omission and Commission," Luke 18:13, 1820 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 3]

Luke 18:13

*And the publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast saying God be merciful to me a sinner.*

There is a faithful proneness in man to look away from his own sins. He will acknowledge that there is wickedness in the world and an alarming mass of it. Yet when the question is brought home, and I enquire, how much of this sin exists in my own heart. I find a difficulty in fixing my thoughts on myself alone. Unwilling to be examined my heart endeavors to turn my eyes upon others, to compare them with myself. And if I find with the Pharisee that I am not as other men are in regard to extortion injustice adultery or any other aggravated sin, I am too apt to conclude my heart less depraved than theirs when perhaps it is full of evil. And the whole difficulty lies in my mistaking the standard of examination. I ought to look to see how I stand in relation to God: whereas I have been comparing myself with man. The law of God should have been the standard of examination: but I have used the law of man. In short I am one of those who *measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise.*

It is to such superficial self - examination my hearers that we are to impute our slow advances in the Christian course, and are frequent relapses into sin. For I appeal to your experience whether this imperfect half way scrutiny into your thoughts and actions be not with you a common thing? Do you not find within you a disposition to relax a little in your Christian warfare when you perceive your neighbor pause, whose ardent and devoted piety you have never doubted? While you acknowledge that there is much iniquity in the world do you feel disposed to change much of it upon your own head. Do you not feel that if others were as pure and holy as yourself society would wear a most religious aspect?

The true Christian should not need indeed omit to notice and to censure the prevailing iniquities of the nation or society in which his lot is cast. But he should be careful not to exhaust his zeal by his efforts against public vices. There are times in these not infrequent when his thoughts should be turned inward upon his own heart and sit in rigorous judgment upon his own actions. And this (the Sabbath) day is in an especial manner one of these times. It is a kind of yearly (weekly) court day when we have an opportunity of weighing ourselves in the balance of truth and holiness. It is in short a preparation day for the final judgment. If we improve it aright we shall get so near and so fair a view of our sins that they will seem to rise up like mountains occupying the whole view of the mind and hiding the sins of others now diminished to mole hills. Like the publican in the text we shall be absorbed in the contemplation of ourselves so as not even to enquire whether their brethren engaged in the same works of self - examination. Like him too shall we smite our breast crying, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* To produce this state of feeling is the object of this discourse: And it may help to effect this by bringing into view:

- 1 Some of our sins of commission and
- 2 Some of our sins of omission

It may give us a deeper and juster sense of our sins if we recall to mind the obligations we are under to

conform to the will of God. And these obligations result from these facts - that God's character is alone supremely lovely - but he is created us - preserved us - redeemed us - giving us his holy word - and may I not add his Holy Spirit? For I am now addressing those who are able to form some just estimate of the demerit of sin: not those if any such be present who dead in iniquity. From all these distinguished blessings there results an undoubted and unlimited obligation to consecrate every faculty of body and soul to the service of God - to perform whatever he requires and refrain from what he forbids, *so that whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do to do all to the glory of God.* And since sin is that abominable thing which God hates and he has most solemnly commanded us to refrain from it is thought word and deed - we are sacredly bound to practice holiness which alone is pleasing in his sight. We are bound to let his love be the grand foundation principle that regulates our whole lives. All the dispensations of God to our fallen world above all the astonishing mission of his Son here for their object to deliver us from the power of sin and thus prepare us for glory. And we have reason to believe that there is a mighty contest now carrying on throughout the universe between holiness and sin and that we are made a spectacle to men and to angels. We my Christian brethren have professedly enlisted on the Lord's side and now mark how great is our treachery to our principles and our treason against heaven, when we forsake this side and do the works of darkness! By our sins we make an effort, whether we know it or not, to break down the walls of heaven - that we may live in the Prince of darkness and raise him to the throne of Omnipotence. And if there be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth so is there triumph in hell over one Christian that sinneth. Under such circumstances every transgression of which we are guilty, however small the eye of man assumes an immense importance and we know of no measure of its magnitude unless it be infinity.

Carrying along with us then a deep impression of the vile nature of sin and of our perpetual obligations to love and serve God let us look at the prevailing disposition of our hearts and practice of our lives. And first does the tenor of our conduct satisfy us that the glory of God is the moving cause of our activity rather than selfishness? We labor month after month and year after year with unremitting diligence to gain to ourselves more possessions or honors. And now what thought enters first and most frequently into our minds when thus employed? The idea that we shall hereafter experience happiness from these acquisitions - or that we shall thus be qualified for making greater efforts in the cause of Christ? Have we resolved that if we become rich we will cast our superfluous riches into the treasury of the Lord? Or if we shall become honorable, we will exert greater influence more boldly and decidedly on the side of religion? Ah, my brethren, it is to be feared we have no such enlarged views! But that we look forward to the splendid pleasures of opulence and the shouts of admiring people rather than to the service of the Lord! Strike out worldly selfish motives and our activity would languish and we should feel that we were serving a hard master.

This brings me in the next place to remark the inconsistency of our conduct in devoting ourselves so assiduously and eagerly to the acquisition of the world when we profess to be seeking a better even an heavenly country. Mark for a moment how vigorously and decidedly the Scriptures address Christians on this subject - and to such this discourse is directed. *Love not the world, says John, neither the things that are in the world - If any man love the world the love of the father is not in him. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth says Christ where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break through and steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also - Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you take no thought (or more properly be not anxious) for your life what you shall eat or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on.* What Christian is there who does not tremble for his spiritual state when he brings his conduct to the test of these unsparing rules of duty and observes the mighty discrepancies! When he looks back upon his life and calls to mind his constant and arduous labors for the meat that perisheth or for the honor that cometh from men only - and

remembers how many more anxious thoughts and helpless hours have been given to the improvement of his fortune than to his spiritual state - how much greater interest he has felt in worldly pursuits than in religion how much more zeal he has manifested for the former than the latter - how immense the balance of time and effort and devotion given to the former - how much more careful in looking into the concerns between himself and his neighbors than between himself and his God; how shorten he has shortened the hours of his devotion and meditation that he might hurry into the business of the world - how that world has often intruded upon his thoughts even in his most solemn services to God and how much greater have been his fears of losing an earthly possession or reputation than a crown in heaven - when all these facts rise up in his memory in terrible array clashing with the commands of God there must there will be within him a fearful looking for of judgment. And yet who of us is so free from these sins that he would venture to cast the first stone at his neighbour?

There is also in society a sin resulting from excessive attachment to the world or the peculiarities of the times - or from blindness of heart and it may be some Christians are chargeable with it. I mean a want of perfect fairness in our ordinary dealings - a disposition to hide the deficiencies of our commodities - and to overstate their excellencies - a tendency to *make the ephah small and the shekel great and to falsify the balances by deceit*. And on the other hand, *it is naught it is not naught saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way then he boasteth*. Such practices creep insensibly upon society and are at length regarded as honest and laudable. But so long as this rule be true, *whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so unto them*, these cannot be justified.

It is probable in the next place that we are chargeable with too much conformity to the world. Here again must we appeal to the decisive language of the bible. *Woe unto you says Christ when all men speak well of you. Know ye not says John that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God says Paul, do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men I should not be the Servant of Christ. And be ye not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may from what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*. Such then is the wide separation that ought to exist in the opinion of inspired apostles between the believer and the world. But alas how often have we endeavored to confound this distinction! Though we may have denied ourselves at times and taken up the cross yet soon have we been weary - and in the hour of temptation cast it aside and exclaimed, *I know not the man*. We are commanded to avoid the appearance of evil. Is this done when we give license by our example to fashionable extravagances - to the gaming table - to idle conversation - to the tale of slander? There is indeed an austere singularity of practice sometimes to be met with that is censurable; because it is affected and proceeds from a desire to be distinguished. But there is also a fear of the public opinions that in a Christian is cowardly. Yet how often has this fear operated upon us more powerfully than the fear of God! Whenever we have disguised our sentiments because they are sentiments because they were unpopular - whenever we have adopted practices because others did or because we fear to be denominated singular or because we were unwilling to displease our friends or lose our popularity then has this base fear governed us - then have we criminally conformed to the world.

And what is the root of this cowardice? It is pride - that cancer of the heart which clings to the Christian as long as he lives. It is this which perpetually disposes us to think of ourselves above what we ought to think. Here it is that we dread so supremely the contempt and reproach of the world and rather than see the finger of scorn pointed at us even by sinners, we are disposed to yield a little - to lower somewhat the standard of practice and mix with the pure principles we have learnt in the school of Christ some of the maxims of men. O could we travel in that elevated path trod by the apostles and martyrs we should find ourselves carried above the sneers and threatenings the little tricks and practices



the follies temptations and vanities of the earth. Were our aims as elevated as theirs we should be looking to no inferior throne of glory in heaven. But now are we satisfied if we can just enter there by the lowest door and shine only as stars of the seventh magnitude.

Let us now proceed to consider some of the our sins of omission: not because those of commission have been all set before you: but because the time allotted to this discourse will soon be exhausted.

It will carry us at once to the foundation of all our deficiencies in Christian duty to consider our omission or imperfect performance of these things - secret prayer - self-examination and reading the Bible. When these are duly and sincerely performed all the Christian affections will be in lively exercise. For these constitute the nourishment of practical godliness without which it will wither and die.

Yet after all, these duties apparently so easy, are the most difficult in life. Take for instance self-examination. The man who has practiced this most will confess that there is no science so difficult as that of his own heart - and after the researches of his whole life the believer will perceive that he has but just learnt the elements of it - and that there is no spot in heaven above or earth beneath which it is not easier to examine than his heart. So full of intricate windings and deceitful appearances and so artfully wrapped in a thousand impenetrable folds that no eye but that of Omniscience can thoroughly look through it. And the man who does not realize that his *heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked* has yet to learn the ABCs of experimental religion.

But there is another more powerful difficulty in the way of attaining a thorough knowledge of the heart and that is a fearful tendency within us to look away from it. There is no other object so difficult to fasten the eye upon. And when we once get a distinct view of ourselves we love to be diverted from the picture.

No wonder then that with all these obstructions before him the Psalmist should cry out *Who can understand his errors? Search me O God and know my heart - try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.* And surely then if David could not penetrate the recesses of his heart it is no wonder that we with all our pressure of worldly pursuits with all our strainings after distinction and with all our conformity to the world, should neglect its examination - should imagine ourselves *to be rich and increased with goods and to have need of nothing, while we are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.*

It is the business of a Christian who grow in grace daily, to shut out from his soul the world the flesh and the Devil and to bring his heart for trial before the tribunal of conscience.

The great question here to be decided is whether he be at that moment prepared for heaven or hell? And to determine it he will examine the evidence on both sides with a most rigid and unsparing scrutiny. He will not shrink from the examination because he fears the result may at once destroy every hope of heaven and show his exposure to perdition: For if such be the case he wishes to know it while the day of salvation lasts.

But my brethren when we look back upon our Christian course how thinly is it marked with such seasons of self scrutiny. How often have we hurried through the world contenting ourselves with indefinite enquiries and in definite answers and passing judgment according to the laws of human society instead of the laws of God! And the little anxiety we feel concerning our spiritual state is the proof of this deficiency: For the more faithful a man is in self - examination the more depravity will he discover in his

heart and the greater will be his anxiety to be freed from it lest it should conduct him to the pit of perdition. While on the other hand the more a man neglects to compare his heart with the law of God the less will he realize the enormous disagreements and the more inclined to settle down into a fatal security. While his feelings and views upon religious subjects are general his conscience will not be disturbed. For such views do not go deep enough to reach it - and such feelings like the faint rays of the winter sun upon the ice melt only the surface of heart. Deeper within it may be a frozen spot - barren of every Christian grace.

Genuine self-examination leads to secret prayer. If therefore we have failed in the former we have failed in the latter. But mark how difficult is it to reconcile this deficiency with supreme love to God. In every earthly friendship we inevitably delight in the society of our friends. If then we love God more than everything human and this is the very excess essence of religion, why do we so often come into his secret presence with so much indifference if not reluctance. Wherefore is it that there is frequently so much formality intrusion of the world and deadness in our communion with God? Why so much distance between God and our souls when there is a day's man between us who can lay his hand upon us both? O who can reconcile all these feelings and this conduct with Supreme love to God? In the words of Christ we may answer, *With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible*. The son of God is emphatically the sword of his Spirit. Very few men are so invulnerable that they can seriously read it without feeling a wound in the conscience. And is not this the cause why we are so prone to neglect it? If as admirers of fine writing we acknowledge the Bible to be full of sublimity and beauty excelling every work merely human - if as lovers of history we acknowledge the events there related to be full of interest - and if a Christian we believe it to contain the words of eternal life - why should that be so visible a disposition to neglect its perusal unless there be a fear within us that our hearts will be reached and smitten by this sword of the Almighty? That we do not understand the bible as well as we ought and might few of us will presume to deny. We all acknowledge this as the standard of religious truth: and yet in our conversations on the subject of religion how soon do we resort to speculation and probable reasoning. And on no other account but because our stocks of bible knowledge is exhausted. How much better do we understand many works upon literature and science than this work of God - this preparation book for the school of eternity!

As before observed the omission or imperfect performance of self-examination, secret prayer and reading the Scriptures - leads to a corresponding deficiency in every other duty. It has affected our observance of the Sabbath. In looking back upon these holy days who of us does not perceive a doing of his own ways - a finding of his own pleasure and a speaking of his own words? What Christian does not perceive a mixing of the things of earth with those of heaven. And when we look forward who does not see with trembling all these Sabbaths going before him to judgment?

It has affected our exertions for spreading the Redeemers kingdom among men. While sin has flourished on our right hand and on our left - while thousands perhaps some of them our relatives and friends have given decided evidence of their hatred of God and heaven - we have not warned them of their danger. When the fire has threatened their dwellings we have been faithful in giving the alarm: but the exposure of their souls to everlasting burnings could not extract from us even a word of exhortation to flee from the wrath to come.

It has affected our improvement of afflictions and mercies. When exercised with the former how seldom could we say in truth *before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word*. And when the latter have been showered upon us without number we failed to realize that, *the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance*. In short this deficiency has affected the whole man. It has caused many of us

to be banished the clear and warm sunshine of God's favor into the cold and cloudy regions of the backslider where we must grow in the twilight and freeze with indifference. Hence are we served, *with the spirit of slumber - having eyes that we should not see and ears that we should not hear*, and continuously balancing between spiritual life and spiritual death.

And now Christian brethren let us summon all our resolution and collect together these many sins of commission and omission and uniting them with those secret sins that are known only to God and our own hearts let us hold them up be they errors so terrific and unsightly before the eye of conscience and look at them in mass and look at them one by one. And if I courage do not fail let us hold up by the side of our sins a catalog if they are not innumerable of the bounties of our long-suffering God. Next to this let be exhibited our obligations to love God supremely as for example his perfect and lovely attributes – a pleading savior – a Spirit of consolation - the word of God and the ordinances of the Gospel. And in the same field of view let there be written the ten commandments. And shall not our own good works also find a place? Alas if placed on such a picture they are too minute to be discovered.

This is the picture of my hearers which we should carry with us this day into our closets. And that is not a Christian eye which can view it unmoved. For there is written upon it in characters too plain to be mistaken *in gratitude to God!* But is there nothing that can blot out this mortifying inscription? O the tear of repentance and the sign of a broken heart will do much. Yet there is something more powerful still wanting - and it is within our reach. *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.* Yes and through the pleadings of that spirit which maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered that blood will be sprinkled upon every penitent. The foul inscription will be effaced and there will be written in its stead, *Son be of good cheer. Thy sins be forgiven thee.*

And when I look around upon this church and congregation do I not catch the eye of some venerable father in Christ Christ who came carries this inscription continually engraved upon his heart? Who can say with Paul, *I have fought the good fight - I have kept the faith - henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness - for me to die in this is Christ, to die is gain - for I know that I have passed from death unto life* - who although not yet delivered from infirmities and sins - does not feel quickly but of a small part of those which have been exhibited in this discourse? If there be such an one present he missed must be a man who early enlisted on the Lord side under the captain of his salvation - and who has grown gray in fighting the battles of faith. Just such a un1 it would be presumption in us who are young to offer advice. But we would be bold to ask it. We long to know by what resolutions by what prayers - by what mortifications of flesh and spirit only what services and the cause of Christ you have reached this enviable point in the Christian race. And should we survive you in this world, we want to catch your falling mantle as you are carried up by a chariot of fire into heaven!

Delivered

At Greenfield 1820 fast day  
 At Brattleborough West Parish April 30 1820  
 At Leverett July 1820  
 At Longmeadow August 1820  
 At Amherst West Parish 1820  
 At Worcester November 1820  
 At Waterbury February 1821  
 At Conway March 1821  
 At Shelburne April 1821



## Sermon 17 Deity of Christ

[Sermon No. 17, "Deity of Christ," John 1:1, 1820 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 3]

John 1:1

*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

The meaning of the language of the bible is to be obtained in the same way as the meaning of any other book. In this principle men of almost every denomination are agreed. Why then do they vary so much in their interpretations of scripture? One great source of their disagreement is the different state of feeling with which they read it. One takes it up and resolves to believe whatever facts are there stated, unless they most evidently contradict one another. Where the subject is above his reason and all his knowledge of it derived from revelation, if there be a difficulty in reconciling some of the facts stated concerning it in the bible with other known facts he is not disposed to say that there is any real contradiction - because he feels himself incompetent to decide. He prefers trusting to plain facts as given in the bible rather than to speculation.

Another man comes to the Scriptures with a resolution to believe no factor there stated or rather to doubt concerning the meaning of every passage till he can reconcile it with every other principle of revealed and natural religion. He supposes that the more perfectly his religious system derived from the bible apparently agrees with the reason the nearer is he to the truth and the more accurately does he understand the true meaning of scripture. Where the fact or doctrine is about the reach of his reason as for instance the future resurrection of the body he will indeed believe it on the authority of the bible, unless there be something in it that apparently clashes with some known principle of morality or science and then he will reject it. If he can he will attach some other meaning to the passage or passages - and if he cannot he will declare himself incapable of attaining to the sense.

We should not know before hand that these two men would be led by these different ideas to any very wide disagreement in religious doctrine. Because we could not say that the bible contained anything apparently opposed to reason. But facts show us that they will adopt very different systems. It becomes therefore necessary to determine which of these men has chosen the most proper mode of examining the Scriptures. And we cannot hesitate to approve of the first as the true course. For in the first place human reason is weak and very liable independently of the bible to form wrong conclusions especially concerning spiritual subjects. These are too much out of the sphere of reason to get a distinct view of them in our present darkened state. And so to God - his nature and the mode of his existence they are subjects too vast for our limited faculties if we are not quickened by revelation. In the second place from the very nature of a revelation we might presume it would contain things incomprehensible. And how shall we presume to say that an assumption concerning one of these things is contradictory to reason where we are able to look at it only in a single point and are ignorant of all its relations except one or two? In the third place this mode of examining the bible will tend to make us more humble than any other - and conquer any prejudices we may possess against facts in the scriptures that are unpleasant or mortifying to pride. We shall therefore be in a better frame of mind for examining them impartially to arrive at their true meaning. We shall be more disposed to look to God for the assistance of his Spirit to enable us to understand his word. And to get at its true meaning will be the principal object we shall have in view - the reconciliation of the facts with reason being a subordinate consideration. Whereas

the man who takes a different course will not feel so much the need of divine assistance: because he supposes his reason to be a sufficient guide and when he comes to a text that seems to contain a mysterious and apparently obscure doctrine - he will be greatly disposed toward its meaning until it teaches something else.

Our first enquiry then in reading the bible is what facts does it reveal? The agreement or disagreement of those facts with one another and with our previous knowledge is an after consideration. Keeping this principle in view. I am about to examine at this time a very important Christian doctrine - and to enquire whether the Scriptures teach us that Christ is really and truly God? Let it be remembered that we are bound to enquire at this time merely after this simple fact. Whether there be three equal and eternal persons in the Trinity is not the question now under consideration. Those terms person and Trinity are of human invention not to be found in the Bible and have proceeded from the many unsuccessful attempts to explain the mode of the Divine existence as Father Son and Spirit. Such terms indeed may be of some use in communicating ideas on the subject so long as they are understood - but they are by no means essential to this doctrine of Christ's divinity. And in many cases they are doubtless the occasion of much difficulty in the reflecting mind and often lead to a disbelief in the doctrine. When the subject of Christ's divinity is mentioned how common is it for those who deny it to reply immediately that it is perfectly absurd to say that three persons are one person - God is one and yet three.

My hearers those who make use of these terms person and trinity as applied to the Godhead must if they can reconcile such seeming contradictions - we shall not attempt it. We wish you to lay aside these ideas at this time and attend to a simple question. Does the bible reveal to us that Christ is really and truly God?

In entering upon the consideration of this question a previous one occurs which must be first settled - how is the Supreme God distinguished in the Bible from all creatures? In the first place this distinction is made by the word God. This name is indeed applied in the Old Testament in a few cases to men. Thus Moses is called God to Pharaoh. But in all these cases the context prevents any mistake and renders the application of the word perfectly intelligible. And in the New Testament it is nowhere simply and singly used except to designate the Supreme God. In the second place the Supreme Gods is distinguished from creatures by his attributes such as almighty power universal knowledge and eternity. In the third place this distinction is made by representing the Supreme God as the only proper and lawful object of worship. *Ye shall have no other Gods before me - I will not give my glory to another*, etc.

Now if we find in the Bible that these three characters whereby the Supreme God is known from all creatures are each of them separately applied to Christ in the same unqualified manner as to God the conclusion will be irresistible that Christ is truly and really God - that is if the declarations of the sacred writers are to be credited.

Let us now examine the bible from Genesis to Revelations solely with a view to determine this question. In the course of this examination I select and put down only such passages as are most striking and clear upon the point. In the ninth chapter of Isaiah the prophet says of Christ, *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*. Jeremiah also says, *this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord* (that is Jehovah) *our righteousness*. In Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians is this text - *Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed of serpents*. And now to the 21st chapter of Numbers and the event to which the Apostles alludes is thus described - *And Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people and*

*much people of Israel died.* Paul therefore calls Christ Jehovah. He also expressly calls him God – *Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came who is over all God bless forever - Amen.* Again in Hebrews he applies to Christ this passage from the Psalms – *But unto the son he saith thy throne O God is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of the kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* In another place Paul says, *let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but humbled himself, etc.* In the writings of John are many passages very clear up on the subject among which is our text- *In the beginning was the Word and Word was with God and the Word was God.* From the same Gospel we may likewise produce this reply of Thomas when his doubts concerning Christ were removed, *And Thomas answered and said unto him my Lord and my God.* Also the conversation between Christ and Philip – *Philip saith unto him, Lord shew us the Father and it suffereth us - Jesus saith unto him have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father?* In John's first Epistle is this text, *And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true even in his son Jesus Christ - this is the true God and eternal life.*

Here then we find a series of texts disperse through the Bible where Christ is expressly called God or Jehovah. But are not these passages wrongly translated - or have they not been added to the sacred text since the days of the Apostles? To determine these questions I resort to the comments of learned men and find that there can be little doubt about the genuineness or correct translation of these verses. The most that has ever been done by any these men is to conjecture that the passages might have been originally written differently. But these conjectures have no facts to support them and therefore of no consequence.

You have however doubtless perceived that I have omitted to mention several text where Christ is expressly or impliedly called God. Such as that in the first Epistle of John – *There are three that bear record in heaven the Father the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.* Also that in Revelations – *I am Alpha and Omega the beginning and the ending saith the Lord which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* And that in the first Epistle to Timothy – *God was manifest in the flesh - justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory:* and likewise that in Acts – *feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.* These texts have been omitted in proof of the doctrine of Christ's divinity not because there is no evidence that they are a part of the bible but because that evidence is not so complete as it is in the passages that have been produced. These texts might require considerable time to clear them from objections and in such an examination there would be danger of forgetting the point at which we were aiming. Those texts therefore have been chosen which have stood and will stand the most severe scrutiny of criticism and which cannot be warped by friends or enemies. And now if these texts do not teach in us that Christ is really and truly God, I confess that I cannot see that they teach any thing – may I cannot understand any part of the Bible.

But we proceed in the next place to enquire whether any of the attributes of God be ascribed to Christ in the Bible. Try first the attributes of almighty power. And here let it be remarked that the only mode of proving God to possess omnipotence is from the fact that he created the Universe. So the power that is able to perform this we can set no limits and hence conclude is to be infinite. Now John says of Christ, *All things were made by him and without him was nothing made that was made.* And these words of the Psalmist are applied by Paul to the Son of God – *And thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of thy hand, they shall perish but thou remainest: and they*

*shall wax old as cloth or garment; and as a creature shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed: but though art the same and thy years shall not fail.* And in the Epistle to the Colossians Paul thus speaks of Christ - *Who is the image of the invisible God - the first born of every creature: For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by him and for him: And he is before all things and by him all things consist.* Here then the creation and the presentation of the universe are ascribed to Christ. If we now look to the old Testament we shall find it stated that, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* And God by the mouth of Isaiah speaks of himself - *I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.* Thus do one class of passages in the bible ascribe the creation and support of the universe to Christ and another to God. If therefore Christ be not God the scriptures contain a direct contradiction not only in sense but in words. And my hearers, *let God be true, but every man a liar.*

We come next to enquire whether the scriptures attribute omniscience or universal knowledge to Christ. *Peter saith unto him, Lord thou knowest all things.* And Christ by his silence assented to this declaration. Says Christ, *no one knoweth the son but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* Christ therefore is able to comprehend God and must have infinite knowledge since God is infinite. In the address of Solomon to God at that the dedication of the temple he says, *For thou even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men.* Yet in Revelations Christ says, *And all the churches shall know that I am he who heareth the reins and the hearts.* If these things do not prove omniscience, what can?

Let us now look for evidence of Christ's eternity. Says Paul to the Hebrews, *Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever.* And in Revelations, not in the passage that has been already mentioned as not possessing complete evidence of having been spoken by Christ but in the 22nd chapter, Christ says, *I am Alpha and Omega the beginning and the end the first and the last.* That the person here speaking is Christ is evident because in the preceding verse he says, *behold I come quickly,* and in the third verse following the same person says *I have, sent mine angel,* etc. Now in the preceding chapter the same description is given of God which is here given of Christ - *I am the Alpha and the Omega the beginning and the end.* And in Isaiah Jehovah thus speaks of himself - *I am the first and I am the last and besides me there is no God.* That is the eternity of my existence distinguishes me from all false Gods.

Thus do we find the bible most clearly attributing omnipotence omniscience and eternity to Christ. Let us now proceed to the last distinction between God and creatures - and enquire whether the Scriptures ascribe and render proper divine worship to Christ.

In the Gospel of John Christ speaks in this manner, *For as the Father raiseth the dead and restoreth them to life so also the Son restoreth to life whom he pleases. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men might honor the Son even as they honor the Father.* But how is the Father honored? By obedience - by love and by worship - yet such ad in an equal degree is the honor claimed by Christ.

It may however be said that the word worship has two significations meaning obeisance as well as spiritual homage and perhaps by men's worshiping Christ is meant nothing more than obeisance. Grant that the word does mean these two things and that some while Christ was on earth paid him obeisance as an uncommon man who yet thought nothing of spiritual worship. Yet we find this worship is not confined to man but is paid by angels and archangels who cannot be ignorant of the true character of Christ and if the following passages do not describe a worship as chaste as spiritual and as exalted is



ever given to the Supreme God it will be impossible in human language to describe such worship.

*When he (God) bringeth in the first begotten into the world he saith let all the angels of God worship him. Again in the second chapter of Philippians, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Hear also the vision of John when heaven was open to him, And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders the beast and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing and every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea and all that are in them hear of saying blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sits upon the throne and onto the Lamb forever and ever - And the four beasts said amen. And the four and 20 elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth forever and ever. Is this mere obeisance - an inferior kind of worship? O my hearers it is one of the most elevated songs of heaven.*

Many instances may be produced where Christ was worshiped by his disciples and followers. The strongest case of the kind is that of Stephen, who in the agonies of a cruel death when he had seen heaven opened and beheld the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God cried out, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit. And he kneeleth down and cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not this sin to their charge - and having said this he fell asleep new.*

Is this mere obeisance an inferior kind of worship? And could a dying martyr favored with a vision of God be so much mistaken as to violate the first and greatest commandment of the decalogue - *thou shalt have no other gods before me - thou shalt worship no other God?* If he were thus mistaken so was Paul when he besought Christ that the messenger of Satan might depart from him - and he prays, *that God himself and the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ might direct his way unto the Thessalonians* - and also when he prays that grace and peace from God to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ might rest upon the Romans - and indeed what apostle and martyr was not mistaken!

In thus going through the Scriptures we find separately and unequivocally the names and the characters of God ascribed to Christ in an unqualified manner. He has every title given him that is bestowed upon the only living and true God except that of Father. The attributes of omnipotence omniscience and eternity (and indeed every other attribute) are given him. He is described as the creator, upholder, governor, and disposer of the Universe and finally he is represented as worthy of the worship and as having received the worship of men and angels. All those marks these by which God is distinguished from creatures in the Scriptures are applied equally to Christ and equally distinguish him from all creatures. If then God be God Christ is God.

My hearers we have been enquiring in this discourse after a single simple fact - whether Christ be truly and really God. And now setting aside all previous opinions we have formed - and omitting all efforts to explain the doctrine and looking at the naked fact, does not the bible reveal it as plainly as any other fact whatever? Suppose I had heard of such a city as London and that it was in England. I now take up a geography of the world to determine whether this be true. On examination I find it stated in half a dozen places in this work that London is in England. In other places also it is said to be in Great Britain and England is known to be a part of Great Britain. It is also said to be on the River Thames and that I know to be in England. It is also put down in the map of the world as being in England and its latitude and longitude agree to England. After all this should I have any doubt that London was in England?

Perhaps this comparison may be thought imperfect on such a subject: but I would ask whether with all this evidence before me I should not have as much reason to doubt of the situation of London as I should to deny that Christ is God when I find the facts so clearly and so repeatedly stated in the bible? I am aware indeed that an objector will produce in opposition to the texts I have advanced many others in which Christ is described as inferior to God. Such texts will indeed prove another fact that Christ was a man: but I dare not say that this contradicts the idea of his being God because the subject is beyond my comprehension. When I hear John declaring that, *the Word was with God and was God*, I feel it to be safer to trust to his declaration than to my own speculations about contradictions: And with the example of an apostle before me I cannot refrain from crying out in view of Christ with all the strength I and ardor of an unwavering faith – *My Lord and my God!*

Delivered

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## Sermon 20 Joys of Heaven

[Sermon No. 20, "Joys of Heaven," Psalms 16:11, 1820 Jun,  
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Psalms 16:11

*In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.*

It is not given to Christians [man] in this life fully to understand the nature and amount of heavenly happiness. Yet the Scriptures sometimes draw aside the veil that hangs before futurity and give us a glimpse of the eternal mansions. And from their representations we learn that the joys of heaven will be internal, external, and eternal. Here then are we get at once three divisions for this discourse. And we shall first endeavour to describe those heavenly joys that are internal - or in other words proceed from the nature of those who dwell there. For the happiness of heaven will not result entirely from an immediate agency of God. It will in part and in no small degree neither, flow from that holy principle implanted in every regenerated soul. God is necessarily happy in himself: because his nature is such as must make him so. And the saint whose soul is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that creates him must for the former reason feel a similar happiness - in a less degree indeed: because God is infinite - man finite. Whenever the saint - is placed if sin be away from him, he must experience a degree of happiness: for the sole tendency of moral virtue or holiness is to produce this. In the present life this tendency is thwarted in a great measure by sin; but when the Christian is freed *from this body of death*, it will be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting happiness. It is as natural for a Christian at death to go to heaven as for the sun to rise or the streams to descend. He has within him the seeds of happiness: and wherever he be there will spring up and flourish. Wherever he be he is in heaven.

But holiness is an active principle and therefore the heavenly inhabitants will be full of exertion. In this world our efforts produce weariness - fatigue and pain: but in heaven with a body and mind can never tire, the reverse will take place and activity will be a principal source of happiness.

In the first place it will be one employment of the righteous in another world to study the works and learn the character of God.

The works of God are either material or immaterial. It is generally supposed that the material part that is the visible universe will all be destroyed at the general judgment. But perhaps there is not sufficient foundation in the Scriptures for such an opinion. And it is much more accordant with our ideas of the goodness of God to suppose that He will continue through eternity to fill space with worlds and worlds with various beings. Now even in this world limited and imperfect as is our knowledge of nature, how alluring and full of interest is the study of the works of God! Whether we look abroad upon the earth and consider the immense yet harmonious variety of insects, animals, plants, and minerals in the earth, air or water, or whether we turn our eyes toward heaven and look at those eighty million suns and worlds that move in silent order and beauty over our heads, there is a calmness - a delight an elevation and a purity in which we render them worthy an immortal soul such contemplations! How supreme the satisfaction then to examine all these astonishing and magnificent works of God with the pure eye of an inhabitant of heaven. But if the present material universe be all destroyed of the judgment there will be a new heaven and a new earth fit for the residence of righteous and undying spirits. And if the present

earth and heavens display so much of the wisdom power and goodness of God, how supreme will be the beauty of this new creation - and how impressively will the character of Jehovah be written upon if to learn whose character will be delightful employment of eternity.

Now if there is reason to suppose that if the world of matter can afford any joy to a glorified spirit much greater will be its delight in examining the world of minds. See all the heavenly inhabitants are made in the image of God - and if the powers of some of the inhabitants of the earth distinguished for their wisdom and knowledge excite our admiration how will this be increased when we are permitted to contemplate the faculties of angels and archangels and to advance in this investigation investigation through the scale of higher intelligences towards the forever incomprehensible Jehovah! There too will the Redeemer, having the form the features and the feelings of a man and yet being over all God blessed forever, there will his mysterious and interesting character furnish a source of everlasting enquiry and contemplation. And through his human nature maybe learnt all that finite beings can learn of the superior Divinity.

The character of God will be more extensively learnt in heaven from his moral government. And the righteous there will be able to understand this - to see the origin, reason, bearing and ultimate effect of every act of God's Providence. *What I do, says Christ, though knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter.* The whole created universe will then appear as it really is, an immense system of means every one of which however remote appearance now, and however mysterious, has an important bearing upon the great end of all gods works viz. to promote his glory and the good of the universe.

In this world and in this subject we speak as children we understand as children we think as children. For we now see through a glass darkly: but then face to face. Now we know in part but then shall we know even as we are known. Though to mortal vision *clouds and darkness are round about God*, and though, *he hath his way in a great deep*, yet in heaven will be seen that, *justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne*, and that, *mercy and truth go before his face*.

Thou art now perplexed O Christian when the when the wicked prosper. When their minions designs succeed and when they oppress the righteous. You see them triumphing over all efforts to extend the Gospel - breaking down religious institutions and establishing immortality and infidelity on their ruins while the faithful and devoted servant of Christ can do no more than sigh and cry in secret places for these abominations. At a period so gloomy the providence of God appears to you inexplicable and you feel your faith in Him to be severely tried. But in heaven you will see that all these events were part of God's moral government - you will see that instead of hindering any of his plans they were the means of accelerating their accomplishment. You'll see that the wrath of man is made to praise God: and while the ungodly set themselves in array against the Lord and against his anointed and exert all their efforts to break down religion in the world all the labors are made subservient to the more speedy establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom.

If may be you are perplexed when you see the mild and faithful Christian struggling through life with poverty sickness and misfortune and finding in this world no resting place. If he be indeed a Son of God why is the hand of the Lord thus heavily laid upon him - why must he go down to the grave in sorrow? O you will learn the cause of all this in heaven when you see on what an exalted throne this man sits - and how purely he shines in the kingdom of God having come forth out of great tribulation as gold several times refined.

Perhaps too in this life you find incomprehensible in some of the doctrines of the bible. You cannot see how man is a free agent and yet entirely dependant on God - how every event can be decreed in the

councils of heaven and yet man be accountable for his actions - how the existence of sin and pain and death in the world are reconcilable with the benevolence and wisdom of God - and how a thousand other difficulties perplex you unsolvable by mortal intellect – fettered in a mortal body. But in heaven being freed from the grossness all these things will be unraveled and you will be able to trace the various branches of the great chain of the divine government and to see how beautifully and harmoniously they bind the universe in one great whole.

These are some of the interesting subjects that will probably exercise the faculties of future glorified spirits. And in themselves they are inexhaustible - in as the heavenly inhabitant advances from one degree of knowledge to another he will find the field continually opening before him his faculties perpetually enlarging - new sources of knowledge unfolding - and everything brightening and beautifying in his intellectual march towards the source of all knowledge and beauty and glory - the unsearchable God. No feeble organs of sense will then interrupt the delightful search – but as their minds speak so will their resurrection bodies be fitted for everlasting and untired exertion. They will drink forever at the fountain of truth and wisdom - undeceived by faults or imperfections and unfettered by the grossness of mortality. The innumerable societies of blessed in heaven will assist each other's investigations - advance without emulation yet with vigor in the same paths and communicate to each other the various dispensations of God to his church and their respective ages and their own trials and temptations - warfare with the world, perseverance and triumphs. Oh how animating the thought that you will then hear from the mouth of Adam, of Noah, of Abraham, of Moses, of David, of Paul and the whole constellation of patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs - the history of their spiritual conflicts and victories!

The second employment of glorified spirits which will be mentioned is to befriend each other.

When Solomon had lived long and observed much of the world he exclaimed, *A faithful man who can find?* And many a man since him smarting under the wounds of treacherous friendship has repeated the question. Oh the friendships of earth are indeed full of uncertainty.

As breath will make them in a breath destroy.

But in heaven will each one literally love his neighbor as himself. For there will be no separate interests no rivalry for honors or profit - no undue ambition - no jealousy to stir up resentment and intrigue and kindle the hatred of spirit against spirit. There the interest of one will be the interest of all. Every individual will perceive that his own station in heaven is precisely that which is calculated to afford him the most delight and contribute most to the pleasure of all. In that station he finds all the happiness he can desire and he cannot envy others. And no small share of this happiness will result from rendering mutual service to each other. Throughout heaven there cannot be found an enemy. In this world if we have one faithful friend it is an inestimable blessing; but there all will be friends - not requiring the trial of twenty summers to prove their sincerity and constancy but at first and forever faithful and constant. Among the many millions of the heavenly inhabitants you will not find one who feels indifferent to your welfare - not one whose heart is not open to your inspection - where you can read all his thoughts and feelings - and these will all be in harmonious unison with yours thus begetting a mutual love that cannot decay. O this is a friendship of which heaven alone is worthy and which heaven alone can produce. It is not the feeble and fickle attachment of mortals but the warm the vigorous and the eternal affection of immortals.

In the third place the chief employment of the blessed in heaven will be to glorify God and the Lamb.

In a future state God will comparatively be all in all both in the natural and moral creation. And these astonishing displays of his character cannot but awaken supreme reverence in the glorified spirits. He will indeed be divested of those terrors in which he so often manifested himself to our inhabitants of earth. To sinners he appeared as a devouring fire in his way was in the whirlwind and the storm - but these manifestations are in heaven unnecessary. Yet he must forever appear in an incomparable greatness and majesty - and here will be a ground for the most profound reverence.

The heavenly host will also find an unfailing source for admiration in God's works of creation and providence. Even in this darkened state enough is seen to awaken this emotion - how much higher then will it rise in heaven where the cumbrous fetters of mortality will be unloosed and the soul be free to range without limit and to comprehend with angelic cleanness!

And from all the displays of God's character on earth and in heaven will the saints hereafter be induced to trust in him trusting him with unwavering confidence. From all these emotions there must result a supreme love - a perpetual complacency in a being so great and wise and good. And when the glorified spirit looks at himself and considers what this being has done for him in bringing him to that place of happiness and perceives the exhaustless streams of divine goodness flowing out continually upon ten thousand times ten thousand beings around him then there must spring up within him a returning feeling of gratitude.

All these exercises which spontaneously rise in the glorified spirit will flow out into songs of praise. In this employment an innumerable company of angels and the great multitude which no man can number of all nations kindreds and tongues are described by John as engaged. They surround the throne and unite in the song, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come! Amen blessing and glory and honor and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the lamb forever.* These elevated descriptions will flow from souls filled with admiration of God and love to his character and since these exercises will be eternal coeternal will be this song.

All this is what is meant by glorifying God. And what greater glory can the creature render to the Creator? So great a part of the employment of heaven will consist of these exercises that the Scriptures call heaven a temple - and describe the heavenly inhabitants as in the temple day and night serving God.

We come at length to the second general division of this discourse where we are to attempt to point out those joys of heaven that are external. By this term I mean such joys as are conferred by the direct agency of God. And that such an agency is exerted the tenor of Scripture decides. It will consist in the first place in giving an absolute release from all infirmity sorrow and pain. These things could not indeed entirely destroy the saints happiness but they would greatly diminish it. God however might place them in a state subject to these evils. But it shall not be this in heaven - for *the glory of God enlightens it in the lamb is the light thereof: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes - and there shall be no more curse. (They shall hunger no more neither thirst any more neither shall the sun cast upon them nor any heat.) There remaineth a rest to the people of God.*

In the next place the direct agency of God in heaven will supersede positive pleasures to the righteous. We are not able indeed to decide what these pleasures will consist. For we cannot fathom the stores of infinite benevolence. But we are certain that *to him that overcometh will Christ give to eat of the hidden*

*manna and will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it. He shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them to living fountains of water.* Whatever different views may be entertained of that figurative language all will agree in this, that it implies a direct communication of very great happiness from God to the righteous. But even Paul did not attempt a description of these joys although he saw them: for they were unspeakable.

In the last place the joys of heaven will be eternal. And this is a property necessary to give perfection to all the rest - and God said that heavenly happiness should be more pure and elevated and that the Saint should feast upon the stores of infinite benevolence and yet had he added that this happiness should at some remote period terminate - it would at once cast a dark shade over the picture. The glorified spirit would be continually looking forward with a fearful, melancholy anxiety to the period of this banishment from felicity. And this would be even in heaven an undying horror that would devour every joy in its bud. But there is no such fear in heaven for the righteous, *Shall go into life eternal to an inheritance incorruptible undefiled and that fadeth not away. They shall reign forever and ever. In the presence of God they shall have fullness of joy and at his right hand pleasure for evermore.*

And not only will the joys of heaven be eternal but they will perpetually increase. As the faculties enlarge they will become capable of greater enjoyment. And God will continually multiply the means of enjoyment. So that the inhabitants of heaven will find his path of happiness wider and brighter as he advances. And his soul both in capacity and joy will be more and more like God as the ages of eternity roll over his head.

Such my brethren is a faint description of those felicities that are the inheritance of every regenerated soul that endures unto the end. And after all how far short of the reality is this description! *O it doth not yet appear, says John, what we shall be. But we know that when Christ shall appear we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is.* In this world we are permitted to catch only a glimpse catch of heaven. The full disclosure would overwhelm our feeble powers. But when we are told that in the *presence of God is fullness of joy and at his right hand pleasures for evermore*, full license is given to us to suffer our imaginations stretch themselves to the utmost in anticipating this glorious rest. We need not fear a disappointment of our anticipations by too ardent or too vivid a conception of those boundless joys. In the hour of spiritual stupidity these conceptions will reanimate our dying love and hopes - and while we are struggling along the rough and barren regions of the earth it will revive our fainting spirits to direct our eyes to those immortal shores - to those *sweet fields* that stand forever *dressed in living green*.

Are bound now O Christian bending beneath the weight of infirmity - feeble and pale with some inveterate disease that is slowly undermining your constitution and spoiling all your relish for the comforts of life and enfeebling you for the services of God - O lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh. Your infirmities and disorders you will leave in the grave - and a body spiritual and immortal will be given you - and your pains will not be remembered amid the joys of heaven.

Art thou oppressed with poverty and with the reproach of the world - art thou vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked - O remember that your Redeemer now lives and reigns being in heaven though worse than you was he once on earth persecuted hated and despised without a place to lay his head. And he will prepare a place for you in his house - will bring forth the best robe and put it on you - and your poverty and persecution will be exchanged for the riches and the love of heaven.

Or art thou Christian, now mourning over the ingratitude and treachery of a child or a friend? Art thou forsaken by one most dear to you on whom you leaned for support and left alone to struggle through an unfeeling world. It will all be made up to you in heaven - you have a friend there who never faileth and he will soon receive you to his bosom that where he is you may be also. What though for a few days you feel the wounds of ingratitude and be without a friend. Soon will you open your eyes in that world where ten thousand times ten thousand glorified spirits will extend their arms to receive you to their bosoms and cherish for you a friendship pure as heaven - lasting as eternity.

Delivered

At Brattleborough East Parish June 11<sup>th</sup> 1820

At Brattleborough West Parish June 18<sup>th</sup> 1820

At Conway July 1820

At Leverett August 1820

At Longmeadow August 27 1820

At Springfield October 1820



## Sermon 22 [Ways in Which Christ Knocks at the Door of the Human Heart]

[Sermon No. 22, "Ways in Which Christ Knocks at the Door of the Human Heart,"  
Revelation 3:20, 1820 Jun, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 4]

Revelations 3:20

*Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and  
open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.*

Notwithstanding all that has been said concerning the inability of the natural heart to love God it is doubtful whether any sinner ever believed there was any insurmountable obstacle in the way of his becoming religious - if he were in earnest to set himself about it. If any have realized that their own unaided exertions were insufficient to give them this character yet when they read in the bible that God *giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask him - that every one who asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened - that the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men* and when he hears Christ saying, *behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to to him and will sup with him and he with me* - when such persons read the unlimited promises of assistance though they believe in their own inability even to think a good thought yet they cannot avoid realizing that they might be able to overcome this *through Christ strengthening them*. And if after all they do not become religious it is impossible they should not charge the deficiency upon themselves and feel guilty of the grossest negligence in not receiving offered assistance. The object of this discourse is to exhibit more particularly in what this assistance consists or to show in what ways Christ knocks at the door of the heart. And he does this

By his spirit,  
By his word,  
By his ordinances,  
By his providences.

Christ knocks at the door of the heart by his spirit.

So radical deep and universal is the disparity of man's heart so dreadfully alienated from God in its every affection and so much positive opposition to his character exists in it that the heat of summer is not more necessary to the bringing forth of the plants of the earth - than is the influence of the Spirit of God to the production and preservation of holiness in the soul. Let man put forth his mightiest moral energies let him rigidly adhere to rules of discipline and duty let him study the works and the character of God - if during all this while the Spirit be withheld he has labored in vain and has not acquired one particle of love to God. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Every good and every perfect gift not only in the natural but in the moral world is from above and comes down from the Father*

*of lights.*

But Blessed be God he has promised that in the times of the Gospel - that is after the coming of Christ unto the end of time he will *pour out his Spirit upon all flesh*, Christ hath, *ascended up on high leading captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. It is expedient for you says Christ to his disciples that I go away: for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart I will send him unto you. And when he is come he will reprove the works of sin and of righteousness and of judgment of sin because they believe not on me – Of righteousness because I go to my Father and ye see me no more; of judgment because the prince of this world is judged.* Here it is evident that by the Spirits reproving the world we are to understand that he reproves the whole world not only saints but sinners: for in the next verse the reason of the reproof is given - *because they believe not on me* - and this is the character of sinners.

From these passages and many more that might be named - indeed from the tenor of the bible throughout the tenor of the bible throughout - we may be assured that although we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves yet God's Spirit is even striving with us and warning us of our spiritual danger. As the result of Christ's obedience and intercession he is poured out upon all flesh and when they do not visit him *he convinces them of sin righteousness and of judgment to come.* When they listen to his warnings he alarms them till they are disposed to flee to the strong hold of safety - and when they hearken to his invitations of mercy he melts their hearts into gratitude by exhibiting to them the boundless love of God displayed in the work of redemption.

The incipient influences of the spirit however when he has not yet entered the heart but is only knocking at the door of it, are so gentle and mild that we are very apt to mistake them for the ordinary operations of the mind. Indeed how can the sinner (and of such we now speak) believe that the Spirit is operating upon his own heart when he denies his influence upon any heart? But there are seasons when every unregenerate man pauses in his worldly and sinful pursuits and seriously reflects upon his past conduct and his future state – when for a time he feels that there is something real in religion and something unsatisfying in the world - and something wrong in his heart. Then is the Spirit active - and these feelings as a result of his influences. Some peculiar circumstances and the man's condition might indeed have been the immediate cause of his sober reflections. But the Spirit gives his thoughts religious character and this up his moral powers of discernment. But the world again presents its allurements, Satan is active in his efforts - and this man closes his ears to the Spirits warnings and returns to his wallowing in the mine. O what an exchange has he made! Had he only opened the door of his heart. He who was in the beginning *with God and was God – he who created all things in heaven and earth, visible and indivisible* would have come in and been his guest. But against him does he shut the door. And what companions has he in exchange. O vile substitutes! The world - the flesh and the Devil!

There are times also when the sinner realizes that the Bible deserves more of his serious perusal. He can indeed repeat many passages out of it but he has never read it seriously and with a heartfelt anxiety to discover the truth it reveals. He resolves to commence a sober investigation of the sacred volume. This my hearers is the workings of the Spirit. Not but that the man could read the bible without supernatural assistance yet he would not read it with such impressions of its importance - there would be a part of that religiousness of feeling he now experiences. And did this man carry into effect his resolutions - did he improve the gentle breathings of the Comforter he would find them followed by a *demonstration of the Spirit and of power. For whosoever hath to him shall be given and he shall have abundantly but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.* And so probably would it be with this man. His reading the bible would be limited to a few chapters - because he had not cherished that

religious feeling the Spirit had given him. But suffered it to be effaced by the lusts of the world - those eternal enemies to religion - those resisters of the Holy Ghost.

There are other seasons when the Spirit unwilling that any should perish stands at the door of the heart and beseeches admittance. You will never forget that hour when some dear friend was torn from you by death your arms by death - and you are left alone on earth a monument of sorrow - O then how tender and yielding was your heart. And with your sensibility there was mingled a feeling of religion. The thoughts of another world often came across your soul because your friend had gone thither. And if you were in heaven you longed at your exit from life to be with him. But for that holy place you fill yourself unprepared and there seemed between your soul and God a mighty interval - an untrodden gulf - you felt alarmed and were brought even to pour out your soul in prayer. O then did the Spirit like a kind friend redouble his strivings with your soul and *make intercessions for you with groanings that could not be uttered*. But gradually did your affection for the dead pass from your heart by the intrusion of the living and so did your thoughts of heaven, *go away as the morning cloud and as the earthly dew*.

In like manner does the Spirit renew his strivings with the unconverted heart at every peculiar season of life. When mercies are showered down in perfusion he touches a more tender string and would fain awaken the feelings of gratitude and love toward so kind and bountiful Father in heaven. In the day of sickness he addresses the fears - as also when his judgments are abroad in the land or *the voice of his thunder is in the heavens and his lightnings lighted the earth* and the tempest is spreading ruin around us. Through the instrumentality of his preached word he likewise comes sometimes an unwelcome visitor with a voice that thrills through the soul of the sinner and carries conviction to the conscience. But alas how often are these convictions suffered to bear away without terminating in conversion!

But we have dwell upon the first head of this discourse longer than we intended and therefore hasten to say in the second place that Christ knocks at the door of the heart by his Word. And were not man's heart harder than the stones it would be broken by this so powerful engine: for in Jeremiah it is said - *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh that rock in pieces!* It is also emphatically styled by Paul, *The sword of the Spirit*, and again he says, *for the soul of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and Spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart*. And when we examine the bible we find that the Apostle has not over rated it's power: though to the understanding of those who have never felt its influence and never read it with seriousness this language of Paul appears the mere effusion of an over heated enthusiast. There is such a simplicity yet pungency in the Scriptures - such a knowledge of the human heart and such a searching into its dark windings displayed by the inspired freeman - such a blow is aimed at human pride on almost every page - such a sinking of the creature and exalting of the Creator - such a bold and unsparing delineation of the universal and unalienated depravity of the human heart - such a picture of the wretchedness blindness and helplessness of man by nature - such a vigorous grouping of mankind into two great classes of sinners and saints - such a leveling of human distinctions - such an extension of the law of God even to the thoughts and motives - in fine so much of heaven and so little of earth is found in the bible that there is no such thing as reading it sincerely and seriously with a belief that it is from God without feeling it's reproofs, entering like so many arrows into the conscience. When the sinner seriously compares his own doings and feelings with the law of God as given in the bible - when he reads that the first great commandment is to love the Lord with all his heart soul and strength - and perceived by looking back upon the exercises of his heart that he does not love him at all - when he reads that, *whether he eat or drink or whatever he do he must do all to the glory of God* and cannot avoid knowing that the glory of God has no place among the motives of his conduct, when he reads that he must deny himself and take

up his cross and follow Christ - must crucify the lusts and unholy affections - must not love the world neither the things that are in the world - must pray without ceasing - must confess Christ before men - must come out from the world and be separate - and all this time knows that he indulges in known sin - that he has never restrained his passions any farther than health and worldly reputation required - that he has uniformly and eagerly sought the riches or honors of the world solely from selfish motives without any desire to promote thereby the cause of religion - that he does not pray at all unless it be in seasons of affliction - that he has not confessed Christ before man - nor done anything in his service - nor come out from the world any farther than to live externally decent to which worldly interest prompted - when the sinner makes such a comparison as this and he cannot avoid doing it he attentively read the bible, it must discover to him his total deficiency and his imminent danger: A conflict will most likely ensue in his heart between the flesh and the spirit and he may be induced open the door that Christ may come in to him and be formed in him the hope of glory. Now there are three modes in which sinners avoid this result. The first is to deny that the bible is inspired - the second is to read it carelessly over with a caviling sceptical spirit - and the third not to read it at all. In one or the other of these modes are most men successful in shielding their hearts against the penetrating influence of the Word of God - and the last of these methods viz. not to read the Scriptures is the one most usually employed.

We come in the third place to say that Christ knocks at the door of the heart by his ordinances. Among these the Sabbath and the administration of the word by preaching are the most restricting. And even infidels acknowledge their importance in maintaining morality and order and decency among men. Since experience evinces that where these ordinances are not maintained society soon relapses into corruption and barbarism. But their influence is not limited to this world. Religion also advances or declines as these flourish or decay. *Faith, says Paul, cometh by hearing. And how they shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?* Ever since the days of Christ his house has been the spot most signalized for the conversion of such sinners. Thousands have there first felt the arrows of conviction reach their hearts, piercing there a wound which they could never heal till they had applied to the great physician of souls.

Let not the success of the ministers of the Gospel however be imputed to their own strength - or talents or eloquence or superior holiness. They are but men, weak, sinful men - who have within them the same passions to subdue - the same body of death to weigh them down - and the same spiritual conflicts to maintain as other men. *The treasure of the Gospel is committed to earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of men. God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty - that no flesh should glory in his presence.* It is not always under the preaching of that man who can bring all the energies of a gigantic mind to impress the truth of the Gospel that we find the most instances of arrested attention and conviction of heart - nor under the preaching of him whose harmonious periods and striking images fasten upon him every eye and captivate every feeling. All this may be to the heavens *only as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument: for they hear his words but they do them not.*

The truth is my hearers that aside from the cooperation of the Spirit the chief efficacy of preaching and of all the Gospel ordinances results from their nature. There is something in the stillness and order of the Sabbath and its professed object that can hardly fail of arresting the attention of the most careless. And as to preaching, there are no other subjects so momentous, grand, and awful as those discussed in the pulpit - and however plain and homely the dressing in which they may be presented their inherent dignity grandeur and solemnity, though they may be obscured cannot be destroyed. The doctrines of the Gospel cannot be presented in a more forcible manner than in the language of the bible. And yet how plain, unaffected and simple is that language! In short the bible is a quiver full of arrows and

however unskillfully the preacher may hurl them it is scarcely possible that some of them should not reach the conscience.

But notwithstanding the fitness of the Ordinances of Christ to arrest the attention of the sinners, the great majority of men contrive to evade their influence and to close their ears against that voice which Christ is thus directing to their hearts. This is in part effected by neglecting these ordinances - and in part by attending upon them in a careless improper manner with hearts full of the word; *whereby the world is choked and becometh unfruitful.*

The next mode and the last we shall mention in which Christ may be said to knock at the door of the heart is by his Providences.

The influence of condition upon the sentimental feelings and habits of men is very extensive. A change in our external state frequently produces a change in feeling and sentiment. We seem as it were to be translated into a new region where objects appear to us in an entirely different aspect. This is more eminently true of adversity. It has a powerful influence in moving those scales from our eyes which prosperity have covered over them. To be abundantly filled with this world's good things ought indeed to lead our thoughts in gratitude to the giver - and were not it not for a strange perversity in our hearts and the dreadful alienation of affections from God which would be the effect and *the goodness of God would lead us to repentance.* But in the day of prosperity man is too apt to say, *By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom for I am prudent.* But when God in great mercy takes away our enjoyment - our riches - our honors - our friends - these false impressions are destroyed and man is led to see his own poverty and weakness. Our mountain that seemed to stand so strong suddenly falls and discloses its foundation of sand. Those flattening prospects to which we were pressing forward so ardently and eagerly - where the fields were covered with flowers and fruit and the voice of music sounded on every side these are now changed into scorched and barren deserts covered with rocks and echoing with the yell of beasts of prey. Before we looked at these things through a deceptive medium which could convert beauty into deformity - barrenness into fertility - and death into life. When this medium is taken away we look at the scene as it is. We pause in our ardent pursuit and weep over the desolate picture and lament our infatuation.

Oh my hearers, there is no need of appealing to your experience in proof of this representation. For at the mention of the holiest you can hardly fail to look back to that day of darkness when you saw yourselves reduced from plenty to want - from honor to dishonor - from health to sickness - from the smile of friendship to the bitterness of hatred - from the endearments of love to the stabs of enmity or when you saw the grave close over the remains of a wife or a husband a father or a mother a sister or a brother a child or a friend. O how dreary and desolate and uncertain did the world then look to you! How tender was your heart - and how you wept over the ruins of your brightest hopes! But what was the final termination of all this? Did not this sensibility soon become blunted and the world gradually lose its deformity and emptiness in your eyes and become more beautiful and engaging until you were again as ardent in its pursuits and as much captivated by its prospects as ever? Did your afflictions end in your conversion to religion and do you now exhibit the fruits of it and well ordered lives and conversations? O it is to be feared that many of us slighted this gracious call of the Redeemer - this powerful knocking at the door of our hearts and went back to the world with hardened hearts - saying its vanities - *these be our gods.*

A single inference will close this discourse and it is this. *It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those who do not open the door of their hearts that Christ*

*may come into them and repenteth them and be he with them.*

Who is Christ? In the scripture he is styled *over all God blessed Governor*. Yet this being who created all things - first condescended to come into this world and die for mankind that there me that they may live. He next ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high to make continual intercession for sinners. And to contemplate the picture of infinite beneficence and love he again comes down from his throne of glory and condescends by his Spirit, his Word - his ordinances and his Providences to knock at the door of every man's heart for admittance - to beseech him by all the motives in heaven and earth to accept of salvation as a free gift readily purchased at his hands. And these tender entreaties does he continue month after month and year after year though perpetually resisted and avoided. Where can there be found a picture of love equal to this?

And now *what shall the end be* of those who turn a deaf ear to all these offers of mercy and close a hard heart against all these pleading solicitations of care and kindness? *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. O how much our punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who have trodden under foot the Son of God - and hath done despite into the Spirit of grace?* O it will be one of the bitterest pangs of our future misery to look back upon this world and remember how often we have driven a pleading Saviour from our hearts - how often we have resisted the stirrings of his spirit - the warnings of his Word - the calls of his ministers - and the rebukes of his providences - and how willfully we rushed to destruction though we had to fight all our way to hell against the stirrings of infinite love.

Delivered

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At Deerfield North Parish Green River School House September 1820

At Conway January 1821

At Conway February 1825

## Sermon 23 Characters That are Shut Out of Heaven

[Sermon No. 23, "Characters That Are Shut Out of Heaven," Matthew 25:10, 1820 Jun, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 4]

Matthew 25 verse 10

*And the door was shut*

Christ in his public instructions often seized upon passing events, OR referred to particular customs among the Jews FOR illustration of his doctrines. Every occurrence was improved and pound to some religious end - and by exhibiting the communion between natural and spiritual objects he would often surprise his hearers into a belief of the truth by thus throwing instruction into their minds at a moment when they were not aware and their hearts were not barred up against conviction. The text we have just read illustrates one of these cases. It is the conclusion of the parable of the ten virgins - five of whom are said to have been wise and five foolish. The Jews in their marriages observed much ceremony - usually keeping a feast seven days. And at the end of this time the parties were conducted to the bridegroom's house by their friends with lighted lamps. After those who were invited and attended him had entered his house, it was closed and after the door was shut no more were admitted. Though the foolish virgins returned after going to buy oil and said, *Lord, Lord open unto us - yet he answered and said verily I say unto you I know you not*. Their neglecting the accustomed preparations manifested such an indifference to the bridegroom and his invitation as justly excluded them from the honors of the marriage feast.

The application of this parable to religion is so plain that Christ did not think it necessary formally to make it. He is the bridegroom - his church the bride - the marriage is the future union of the church to Christ in heaven. And the ten virgins represent professors of religion. Five of went into the marriage feast, because their lamps were trimmed and burning - that is, in the Spiritual sense, because their hearts were filled with holy affections in this country's dispositions by the Spirit of God. But five had no oil, that is were destitute of these affections although they had an appearance of religion. They therefore were thought out from shut out from the marriage - and against them will the door of heaven hereafter be shut. And so will it be closed against many other descriptions of persons. And it is the object of this discourse to point out more definitely who will thus be excluded from heaven.

And here let it be remarked that the invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb is not like the invitation to a feast on earth confined to a few - but it is wide as the world embracing every rational soul - *To every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price. The Spirit and the bride say come and let him that herewith say come: And let him that is a thirst come and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely*. And Christ not only gives this invitation, reaching to every man civilized or savage, but he urges them to accept of it by the stirrings of his Spirit by the teaching of his word - by the instructions of his preached gospel and by all his dealings with men prosperous or adverse. The world is an immense storehouse of means all adapted to bring us to accept this gracious offer. O it is indeed gracious! to invite and urge such unworthy rebels as we are - without any moral soundness from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot to go to the seat and to feast forever upon those joys *which eye have not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive*. But the day of mercy cannot last forever. And when this is once closed and the night of God's vengeance settles over the world the

door of hope and of heaven will be shut up forever. Those who have listened to the calls of the gospel and clinging around the cross have been carried into the new Jerusalem will no more go out. While those who have slighted these invitations will plead in vain for admittance. O who of us my hearers will be thus left in outer darkness and see the door of heaven eternally barred against us?

In the first place this will be the lot of those of us who professing to be the disciples of Christ do not live agreeably to his Gospel.

And shall we say that because the ten virgins in the parable represent professing Christians and half of them were foolish therefore half of the professors of religion will be shut out from the marriage supper of the Lamb? Such a principle or interpretation carried through the Bible would involve us in absurdity. The day of judgment alone will declare who among professors of religion are wise and who are foolish. But it is certain that many of us who have named the name of Christ before man will hereafter knock in vain at the gate of heaven for admittance. For says Christ, *Many are called but few are chosen. Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in but shall not be able. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? And in the name done many wonderful works? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.* There be some professing Christians who concerning the faith *make shipwreck - others having begun in the Spirit and in the flesh - others who forsake their first love and others whom it is impossible to renew again to repentance, saying they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame and do despite unto the Spirit of grace.* Against all such most surely will the door of Heaven be finally closed. There are others who cannot find any evidence of their Christian state in their lives - but who rely upon certain powerful convictions and succeeding joys at the period of their supposed conversion for proof of their regeneration. Such will find at last that not every one that saith unto Christ Lord, *None shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but they who do the will of his Father which is in heaven.* Other professors there are who have surrendered their hearts to Christ only in part - they do not feel that salvation is holy by grace through faith but place some secret reliance on their own good deeds. If religion can be made a secondary object and if God will accept of a secondary place in the heart these would be saved. But in heaven is no place for the man who does not *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness* - who does not feel the burden of his sin to be so great that a Saviour alone can free him and who does not accept of salvation as a free unmerited gift through the redemption by Jesus Christ. From general confessions of their sin - a general view of God's benevolence and a speculative acknowledgment of the doctrine of atonement will never save men from the wrath of God. He has chosen his own way of saving sinners and if they refuse to come quite up to that discriminating line he has drawn in the Bible - if they take part of their religious system from the Scriptures and supply the rest by their own reason - if they lower down one jot or tittle that standard God has established as the measure of their holiness or if they received for doctrines the commandments of man they do all this at their peril. God hath said *Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* This man who is not thus regenerated therefore never will enter heaven. God has said that, *Christians are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.* Hence then we may conclude that the door of heaven will be closed against all those shut against all those who seek justification by their own works. And hence to perceive that vague and general view concerning the plan of God salvation will not save us - since such views will never lead us to seek regeneration and justification in the way God has appointed.

There are other professors of religion who assent to every doctrine of the Gospel and who are very



zealous in contending for the faith once delivered to the saints but who show their faith by their words not by their works - who are not careful to maintain good works and who do not keep the commandments of Christ. Now there is nothing plainer in the bible than that faith without works is dead - and there cannot be a heresy more destructive or a delusion more fatal than a belief that a man can be a Christian however firm his belief who wittingly and habitually violates the commandments of the moral law. Scarcely a moral precept can be found that is not contained in the Scriptures enforced by the strongest language. This new principle implanted in the heart of the Holy Ghost is an active principle - and will be in continual exercise for destroying remaining corruption in a man's own bosom and for fulfilling every duty to his fellow men and his God. *The works of the flesh says an Apostle are manifest, which are these adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelling and such like: of the which I tell you before as I have also told you in times past that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long deferring gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law. If therefore these last mentioned fruits do not appear in the professed Christians conduct the love of God is not shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. If any man love me, says Christ, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings. He that saith I know him, says John, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. Hence then may we conclude that if any of us makes the whole of religion to consist in belief without practice, we are deceiving ourselves: and when once the master of the house (that is Christ) hath risen up and shut the door and we begin to stand without and to knock at the door saying Lord Lord open unto us: he shall say unto us I know you not whence you are: Depart from me all you workers of iniquity.*

And here we may remark how aggravated bitter and agonizing will be the disappointment of the professor of religion who has deceived himself with a false hope who has imagined himself to be rich and increased with goods and to have need of nothing. But when he opens his eyes in the eternal world finds himself a naked miserable unfriended soul. And O how despairing will be that look of his when he turns his eyes toward heaven and sees the last of its gates closing against him and the bridegroom is death to his voice pleading for admittance! There was a friend in heaven to intercede for him while he was on earth - and strove with him by his Spirit, his vow and his ordinances to deliver him from the strong delusions which self-righteousness had involved him. But with a blind obstinacy he would not listen to those merciful warnings. And now will that friend - that long suffering Jesus close his ear against all his cries and he will be see the mild countenance of a friend changed into the sternness of a judge - and instead of feeling the warm and invigorating beams of the Saviour's love he will feel the flames of Divine wrath withering his inmost soul. He will even the man of Nineveh around him enduring a punishment more tolerable than his for they repented at the preaching of Jonah. But he has been deaf to the calls of the Gospel to the word of God - and closed his eyes against the full blaze of lights that shines in a Gospel land. Nay with presumption has he taken a seat at the table of Christ without examining his heart and thus *has eaten and drank damnation to himself.*

We proceed in the second place to point out some other descriptions of men against whom the door of heaven will finally be shut. And by looking forward only a few days we can in imagination see them as they approach the new Jerusalem and seek in vain for admission to its golden streets.

Look first at the man who in this world entertained the idea that God was so benevolent Being that He never could punish such weak and ignorant creatures as men are and who therefore expected to be received into heaven without having made any preparation for it. But he has now crossed the dark valley of death and the scales are fallen from his eyes and he perceives that God has also an attribute of

justice to support. He sees that *justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne* and against his own character does this attribute now stand out to ban him from heaven. On earth justice and mercy might have been reconciled in this man's salvation had he only embraced Jesus Christ as a mediator. But his proud Spirit would not stoop to so humbling a doctrine which seemed to him foolishness. He preferred trusting to loose notions of God's clemency. And how full of vexation and disappointment must it be that look he now cast towards heaven and hears the armies thereof uniting in the song of Moses and the Lamb – *just I am there are thy ways thou king of saints*.

Next to this man you may see him advancing full of confidence in his qualifications for heaven who on earth believed that if a man were honest and upright and honorable and merciful he could not fail of heaven though he did not believe in the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. But as he approaches the walls of heaven he is struck with those elevated songs of worship which continually ascend from the blessed inhabitants: he has never acquired any relish for such worship and all this appears to him now as disgusting as when he saw the saints on earth engaged in adoration and praise. And were he to be admitted to heaven he would have a spiritual body and would have no temptations to sin so that there would be no room for the exercise of but a small part of morality he had practiced on earth. Hence does he perceive that were he in heaven he would have no employment there, since he could not join in those services which constitute the chief happiness of the saints. And now for the first time does he perceive that it is right the gate of heaven should be shut against him since he must be miserable were he admitted there. O how bitter is that mixed emotion of disappointment and vexation and despair which now feeds upon his soul.

Look now at a man of another description advancing towards the gate of heaven through which the Bridegroom and his guests have gone in and shut it up never to be opened. This man on earth was one of those who gave himself no trouble concerning a future state and suffered every warning to die away without ever rousing him to reflection. But he is at length soured - and with a fearful anxiety presses for admittance into heaven. But it is too late. The door is shut! Perhaps for twenty or thirty or forty years he has slighted the most pressing invitations to put on the wedding garment prepare himself for the marriage supper of the Lamb. At length death called him from the world of grace and he now lifts up his eyes in a world of sorrow. And wherever he turns then all to him is the shadow of death.

The next man who presses toward the closed gate of the New Jerusalem is one who has lived and died without prayer that is without a habit of prayer either and his family are in the closet. Believing that God knows all our wants before we ask him and then he will not infringe the cause of nature to answer our petitions this man regarded prayer as mere waste of breath not considering that it is one of the appointed means by which God communicates his blessings and that it is the natural expression of a heart that truly loves God. And now as he comes to the door of heaven he begins to realize that his God is a stranger to him and that by neglecting communion with him while on earth he is a stranger to the employments of heaven. Hence does he perceive the reasonableness of that fate by which he is shut out from the presence of God and the Lamb.

We may look next at the rich and the honorable man who advances with a full confidence that as on earth so in heaven he shall be welcomed and flattered and raised to an exalted seat. How cutting then will be his misery when he hears a voice from the high and holy place thou in thy lifetime has received good things – thou hast had thy servant. And when he raises his eyes toward heaven this man recognizes many who on earth were his inferiors who waited upon his nod whom he oppressed and despised and in whose society he felt it a disgrace to spend even an hour many of these he now sees sitting upon thrones wearing white robes with palms in their hands and crowns of immortal glory upon

their heads: while he is thrust into outer darkness with dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and idolaters and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie! O what a state is this at human pride and you can perceive how deeply it strikes his heart by that countenance wild with despair and by those curses that are forced forth against the Almighty. But all is of no avail for the door of Heaven is one which Christ shuttereth and no man openeth. However powerful riches and splendor and learning on earth they cannot purchase heaven.

But who is this that stands at a distance and seems afraid even to cast a look toward the city of God? It is the man who scoffed at religion on earth and regarded it all as a delusion. And now when the full blaze of reality and demonstration bursts upon his sight and he perceives that he has been fighting against God how should he dare to attempt an entrance into the spot where this God his energy makes the most signal manifestation of his glory and truth! Better is outer darkness with all its weeping and gnashing of teeth than such a display of God and were he forced into heaven it would add a double pang to his misery.

By the side of this man stands another who on earth has taken the name of God in vain and who now begins to feel those curses he so often invoked. O he dare not approach the hall of heaven lest the flaming sword of God's justice turning every way to guard the holy city from everything that defileth it should come down upon him without mercy.

Along with these men you perceive others of different characters on earth but all bearing the mark of sin in their foreheads. Then you see the idolaters, the drunkards, the liars, the fornicators, the adulteress, the deceitful, the dishonest, the thief, the robber, and the murderer not presuming to look toward heaven for admittance there - not wishing to approach nearer to that Being whose absence produces despair but whose presence would be to them a consuming fire. O what a group of misery! What a hateful society in which to wear away eternity!

Yet my hearers among all these various characters against whom the door of heaven is closed, do we not discern our own! Let the enquiry come home individually to our hearts who among us must be cast into outer darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth? What if an Omniscient God this day should call upon those of us whose lamps are trimmed and burning to go with him to the feast of eternity! Would not a fearfully great multitude of us be left to crowd around the closed door and to mock in vain? What if at this moment death should smite every person present! Would our spirits immediately ascend to heaven? Would there be no suffering? Is our work done and well done have we consciences void of offenses towards God and man? Have we all embraced Christ by faith? Have we all been regenerated by the Spirit of God? Is there no false or self-deceived professor among us - no self-righteous man - no one living unconcerned about futurity - no one living without prayer - no one receiving all his good things in this world - no scoffer - nor blasphemer - nor drunkard - nor liar - nor fornicator - nor adulterer - nor hypocrite! O thou who searches the heart and triest the reins make each of us to know our real characters and suffer none of us to neglect our preparation for heaven till the door be shut! And to thee shall be the glory through Jesus Christ - Amen.

Delivered

At Brattleboro at a lecture N.W. part of town June 1820

At Conway (Shirshire) November 1820

At Conway at the Meeting House March 1822



## Sermon 25 Day of Judgment

[Sermon No. 25, "Day of Judgment," Revelations 20:12, 1820 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 4]

Revelations 20:12

*And I saw the dead small and great stand before God.*

II Corinthians 5:10

*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*

*[The first paragraph appears to have been added some time after the sermon was originally written. It is squeezed between the title and the passage of scripture.]*

For nearly six thousand years death has been mowing down the human race and consigning them to the grave by multitudes. Nearly twenty - five millions have fallen before him every year - more than seventy thousand every day and about three thousand every hour and nearly one every second. At this rate the earth already contains in its bosom the graves of more than one hundred - fifty - thousand millions of our race. Many thousand millions more will sleep in it and the final consummation of all things mentioned in the text.

If we suppose the average population of the globe since the creation to have been no higher than six hundred millions and that one such generation disappears every forty years and is exceeded by a new one it will follow that the number of inhabitants that have lived on earth previous to the present time falls but little short of ninety thousand millions. How many more inhabitants are to exist on earth previous to its destruction we know not: but as the millennium is not yet commenced and at that time Christ is to reign a thousand years in the world it will be a very moderate calculation to state the population of the globe from beginning to end at one hundred - fifty thousand millions. And these are that great assembly of small and great which will then stand before God [which must appear before the judgment seat of Christ]. Not one of this immense number at whatever period he lived - in whatsoever place however obscure and unknown in life or death - however short his existence not one will be about - for that day all of the days were made - that meeting is the consummation of every earthly event.

In this world a thousand causes separate us from those we once knew and even from our nearest relatives and friends so that we see them no more. The grave of the father is often in one quarter of the world and that of the child in another. The husband perishes on the ocean many leagues from his family - and thousands of friends are denied the mournful satisfaction of closing the eyes of those they love. But the meeting before the judgment seat of Christ will restore to each other's view the separated friends. Yes and their too will enemies meet and the rich and the poor - the honorable and dishonorable - the prince and the peasant - the virtuous and the vicious - the religious and the irreligious - all of every character grade and condition will hear the shout of the archangel at the trumpet of God and crowd around the tribunal of Christ.

It is my intention my hearers in this discourse to confine myself as closely as possible to the facts stated in the text that we must all [stand before God] appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Having taken a general view of that great assembly we shall now proceed to select individuals who were in some way or other connected on earth and whose opinions or words or examples contributed to help one another to heaven or to hell. We shall endeavor to point out to you their appearance and feelings when they first meet before the judgment seat and looking at each other recognize a relative or a friend or a companion or a teacher or a scholar.

The object for which we are to assemble around the heavenly tribunal will be known by every Spirit. We show each one of us most forcibly realize that our eternal destiny is there to be fixed, according to the deeds done in the body. Our thoughts therefore will be irresistibly turned back upon this world. And all our conduct here will pass in rapid distinct view before us. Every spot where we violated the laws of God or performed deeds of holiness - and every companion who persuaded us to the one or the other will be more clearly impressed on the memory. How forcibly then will it strike us and what a mixture of emotion will it excite when we lift our eyes and see that companion standing by our side!

Look first at the scoffer who on earth turned the subject of religion particularly the experimental part of it into ridicule. Before a particular set of companions he displayed all his wit in setting off the man of prayer - and even provided so far as to make a mock prayer in the presence of the God who will not be mocked with impunity. He then gained the hardy applause of his companions and they formed a band mutually though unknowingly pledged to blind each other's eyes and to rush unto destruction. Religion then appeared all a farce. Now it seems all reality - as they open their eyes before the judgment seat and find themselves with the same companions. But O how changed the scene and how changed their feelings! Every look at each other recalls to mind their hated communion on earth - their scoffing and blasphemy. Self-condemned they do not wait the sentence of the judge before whose bar they stand but begin to pour forth mutual reproaches and curses - an employment which is to last forever.

We will point you next to the man who in the world spent much of his time and possessions in riot or drunkenness or gambling. How full of honor is his countenance when he sees his companions stand before him! They allured him to those corrupting scenes when he was yet uncontaminated by the evil that is in the world. They led him on from one step to another - from the intemperate frolics to the gaming table - from this to profanity - fraud infamy disease and untimely death. All these scenes and this conduct now rush over his guilty soul as he stares these companions in the face: in vain does he call upon them now to save him from the coming wrath of the judge and execrate their cruelty - their only answer is reproach for reproach and execration for execration.

Before the same tribunal you may see also the seducer meeting the object of seduction. This sin of his was already praying upon his soul and he knew that it would in justice cast him down to the very lowest place in hell. For he had violated his most sacred promises - he had betrayed unsuspecting innocence and virtue and plunged a human being from hope and happiness down to despair and perdition. On earth his heart felt not how enormous was his guilt but now the very thought was in supportable: and what a shock does it give his feelings, as the wild and despairing countenance of mindless innocence turns fall upon him and fastens upon him a look of anguish inexpressible! He turns to flee from the agonizing pictures: but that countenance follows him through the midst of so many millions and he hears continually the shriek of despair and the cry of reproach entering like so many arrows into his soul! Yes and this same countenance and this same voice will follow him and find him and harrow up his soul forever!

We will turn our eyes next to two men who on earth were enemies. They could not endure each other's society and a separation took place between them - and they would listen to no reconciliation each one insisting that the other was wrong and must make all the concessions. Thus did they cut themselves off from every hope of heaven: for when they came with their gift to the altar that is when they came to pray before God they did not first go away and be reconciled - and since they did not forget neither did their father in heaven forgive their trespasses. Thus they lived and thus they died. And when they meet before the judgment seat of Christ how full of fury and revenge is that look each casts upon the other according him as the author of his ruin as the means of bringing him into final condemnation. It is indeed true that they have mutually barred each other out of heaven. Had they been forgiving and reconcilable on earth their father in heaven would have forgiven them. But their ungodly feelings separated them while they lived and led them to say all manner of evil one against another: and now will they have the satisfaction of indulging their persecuting Spirit through all eternity.

The next man who arrests our attention before the judgment seat by his agitation and trembling is a character very common on earth. You have often seen him on the Sabbath that day which the Lord hath made in violation of the laws of the land - and in opposition to the feelings of all the more respectable classes in society and above all in defiance of the law of God, *remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy* - you have seen this man strolling about the fields - or tending to his worldly business or riding for pleasure or profit, or paying visits, or reading irreligious books and in many other modes *doing his own ways - finding its own pleasures and speaking his own words*. When entreated by some Christian friend not to pursue so demoralizing and unworthy a course of conduct he only *laughed him to scorn*. But as he now stands before the judgment seat he perceives that in heaven there is one eternal Sabbath more spiritual and strict than any he even ever witnessed on earth - he perceives therefore that he is not prepared for enjoying heaven were he admitted there. His violations of the Sabbath on earth now crowd upon his memory - and so do the admonitions of that friend whom he left to scorn. Yes and as he raises his eyes he perceives that friend before him - with a countenance full of immortality and beaming with that joy he is soon to enter. O that look goes to the soul of the sinner and raises the storm of emotions there which never can be quelled. The laugh of scorn with which he once answered every warning is now exchanged for the groan of despair. He flees from the presence of his once faithful friend - and gladly would he hide from the face of his judge who is *Lord of the Sabbath* - for he now appears in flaming fire.

The next picture to which we would direct your eyes is that of the oppressor now in his turn tormented by those he once oppressed. You see one of this description surrounded by the poor the widow the fatherless whom on earth he had robbed of their hard earned pittance and made himself rich by cruel extractions. Once he was above law and feared no earthly tribunal: but these poor men now call upon him to look at the judgment seat before which he is dragged. O his heart has already been condemned and how gladly would he give a thousand worlds to those whom he oppressed on earth if it could ease for one hour the gnawings of that worm that never dies.

You see another earthly oppressor surrounded by a whole nation, calling on him to remember how many of them he had been the means of hurrying into eternity, and what an enormous load of misery he had heaped upon them. What a meeting is this and what man could endure it! Yet it must be endured by all the conquerors and bloody oppressors of the earth - and the pang will become more and more intolerable forever.

We are next called to look at those who sustained a more intimate and tender relation on earth. And do you not see the fallen countenance of that husband as he meets her who was once his wife? On earth

that wife had often entreated him by her Christian example and affectionate exhortations to forsake him and embrace the Saviour. But he was deaf to all her kind warnings. He regarded her as a weak deluded woman. Yet now before the judgment seat of Christ he perceives her about to hear the invitation *come thou blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*. While to him it will be said, *depart thou cursed into everlasting fire*.

And on the other hand you may witness that wife on reclaimed by the thousand examples and admonitions of a husband now taking a last agonizing look at him as he is ascending a throne of glory while she is hurried away to the regions of outer darkness.

Before the judgment seat of Christ will the unbelieving husband also meet the unbelieving wife. In their journey through life they united to oppose religion and strengthened each other's hands in resisting the warnings of the Spirit - of the Bible and of the pulpit. And they succeeded. But now they have opened their eyes in a world of realities and what a meeting is theirs - where as they look at one another they realize that they were blind leaders of the blind and that each has helped the other forward in the road of ruin! Regarding one another as mutual betrayers they will pour forth mutual reproaches and look upon each other with unmingled disgust.

But in the midst of these reproaches their children come forward to fling another dagger to their souls. O how agonizing and distracting is their complaint! Hear a son on earth dearly beloved, thus addressing his father. *O my father, through your example and omission I am here a guilty wretch before the tribunal of my God. How many Sabbaths passed away and you gave me no instruction in religion! You never told me that I was a sinner - you never pointed me to Christ nor informed me of the torments of hell. You never taught me how to pray - you did not collect us morning and evening around the family altar. In everything relating to our worldly interest you were kind and faithful. But in regard to religion you were unfaithful and cruel beyond expression. And we now call on you to deliver us from the wrath of our offended judge. O save us from going down to the flames of the lower world.*

Another meeting of those intimately connected on the earth will take place before the judgment seat of Christ and it is a meeting full of interest. The unfaithful unworthy minister of the Gospel there finds the wretched people whom he has deluded and helped to perdition. It may be that he spent his time on earth in inculcating false doctrines - or that he preached himself instead of Christ - or that he omitted to declare the whole council of God - or that while he proclaimed the truth as it is in Jesus - he did not live as becometh the Gospel and thus by his practice gave a lie to his profession. In either of these ways he was an unfaithful minister and was a means of destroying the souls of men. And now you may see the people who were thus deluded crowding around him, and crying aloud for vengeance to be poured upon him. In vain does he strive to hide himself from their view. With the fury of despair they follow him and reproach him in the midst of millions. And when he and they are cast into outer darkness it will be no small part of his torment to dwell forever with those whom he his preaching or omission or example has cut off from heaven and from hope.

On the other hand you perceive the judge of all the earth confronting impenitent sinners with the faithful minister whose warnings they slighted although they heard them so often. This preacher cried aloud and spared not - and declared the whole council of God whether men hear or whether they forbore. All this the sinners who sat under his ministrations well remember and now they stand without excuse naked and unfriended before their judge. Formerly they got rid of the faithful exhibitions of their duty from the pulpit by ridicule or by reproach. But the day of realities is now come - they dare not deny that they were warned of such a day. For he who warned them is now before them. And they stand



waiting for the moment when the whirlwind of the Lord shall blow them away as stubble.

But my hearers we will dwell no longer on such agonizing pictures. We will look for a moment at those whose meeting before the tribunal is joyful. And it is animating to look at that man who meets one on earth formerly his friend and who by his faithful admonitions was led to embrace the Saviour. How much of heaven beams from their countenances as they now first meet after having crossed the dark valley of death and are safe on the shores of eternity, before that Saviour whom they love, who is already more bending forward to place them upon that throne whereon he sitteth at the right hand of the Father!

There too may you see the husband and the wife who helped each other forward in the road to heaven while on earth. Their union in this world was rendered the means of preparing them for an everlasting union in heaven. And as they now witness the smiles of an approving judge how sweet it is to look back to the earth and remember how often they walked to the house of God in company - how many prayers morning and evening they offered up and how many exhortations and encouragements they gave each other to press forward toward the mark for the prize! And O what an accession to their joy do these parents experience when the children over whom they have so often watched and prayed and whom they have taught so much in religion and offered in baptism to the glory of Almighty God when these children meet them and bless them for all their kind exertions whereby they were brought to embrace religion and can now meet their judge in peace! Christian parents could heaven itself afford a sweeter or a purer joy than this?

Yet there is one more meeting not less delightful. And it is the meeting of the faithful minister of Christ with those who have hearkened to his instructions and by his instrumentality have been led to embrace the Saviour! These are the seals of his ministry and the crown of his rejoicing - the proof that he has not labored in vain. And could he be assured of meeting one such soul in the day of the Lord. O it would be worth laboring and suffering, spending and being spent, during a life of three score years and ten!

My hearers we ought not to dismiss this subject without enquiring what will be our meeting at the judgment seat of Christ. For there must we all stand - either in our character as preacher or hearers - as husband or wife as parents or children - as enemies or friends. There as we cast our eyes upon one another all our relations in this world and all our actions here will crowd upon our memories and sink us with despair or elevate us with joy! O it is an overwhelming thought.

What then will be the dread reality! Would to God that meeting might be to every one of us full of peace and joy and heaven. Would to heaven that we who have this day worshipped God in his earthly temple, however we may be separated on earth, might hereafter unite in peace and noble services in that *building of God that house not made with hands eternal in the heavens!*

Delivered

At Brattleborough West Parish June 18th 1820

At Conway November 1820

## Sermon 27 [Prayers for the Irreligious]

[Sermon No. 27, "Prayers for the Irreligious," Psalms 106:23, 1820 Dec, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 5]

Psalms 106:3

*Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.*

There is not on record a more striking instance of the ingratitude and obduracy towards God than is found in the history of the Israelites during their journey through the wilderness. Scarcely had they entered upon their route with the plagues inflicted upon Egypt yet fresh in their memories - and with a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night manifesting to them the certain protection of God and though they advanced under the constant display of a miracle they soon began to distrust the faithfulness of God, *and they said unto Moses because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in this wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us to carry us forth out of Egypt?*

By manifesting such a distrustful Spirit the Israelites as the Psalmist declares provoked by the Red Sea. But the prayer of Moses turned away his displeasure. *And the Lord said unto Moses wherefore cried thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.* They did so and saw the Red Sea divide itself for them to pass through - while its returning waves buried their enemies forever. Yet in three days where these stupendous miracles forgotten and ungrateful murmurs again filled the camp because the waters of Marah were bitter. The intercession of Moses again prevailed. And in the midst of miracles they again advanced. But soon was the cry heard - *Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the fleshpots and where we did eat bread to the full: for ye have brought us forth into the wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.* Still did the long-suffering of God endure so much perverseness - and he replied to Moses, *behold I will rain bread from heaven for you.*

These repeated deliverances however did not prevent repeated murmurs. And at Mount Sinai on whose top the glory of the Lord sat like devouring fire - in the visible and awful presence of God the people have fallen away to idolatry - had seared a molten calf and were celebrating its unholy rites while Moses was in the Mount receiving laws from God. This insult upon the Majesty of heaven appeared too outrageous for forgiveness - therefore says the Psalmist, *God said he would destroy them had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath lest he should destroy them.* And in the book of Exodus where this event is recorded similar language is used. *The Lord said unto Moses I have seen this people and behold it as a stiff - necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the Lord his God and said Lord why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Turn from the fierce wrath and repent of this evil against my people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel thy servants to whom thou holdest to thine own Self and saidest unto them I will multiply your seeds as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed and they shall inherit it forever. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.* This is indeed language accommodated to human transactions and not to be understood literally because God cannot repent:

but the fact which we wish to be noticed in this affair is this that the Israelites were spared in consequence of the prayer of Moses.

Nor was this the last time in which the intercessions of this man of God prevailed. At the distance of only three days journey from Mount Sinai the people again complained *and it displeased the Lord and the Lord heard it and his anger was kindled and the fire of the Lord burnt among them and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses and when Moses prayed unto the Lord the fire was quenched.* Besides this instance we find Moses in the ninth chapter of Deuteronomy thus addressing the Israelites - *Again at Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the wrath - Likewise when the Lord sent you from Kadesh-barnea - then ye rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God and ye believed him not nor hearkened to his voice. Thus I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights as I fell down at the first because the Lord had said he would destroy you. I prayed therefore unto the Lord and said O Lord God destroyed not by people and thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed through the greatness which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.*

In all these instances my hearers you perceive one prominent fact - that the prayers of Moses were the means of saving the children of Israel from destruction and of obtaining for them many distinguished blessings. This fact is asserted in the text, *therefore he said that he would destroy them had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach to turn away his anger lest he should destroy them.* Moses is said in the Scriptures to have been *very much above all the men which were upon the face of the earth* and he is called the *man of God*. His eminent piety thus rendered his prayer thus efficacious. And here you have a most striking instance of the mighty influence of a devoted Christian's prayers to God. Moses indeed is not the only example we might produce from the bible on this subject. Witness the wrestling Jacob and the prevailing Israel. Or Hezekiah when the Lord in answer to his prayer slew in one night one hundred eighty - five thousand Assyrians and at another time added fifteen years to his life. Or David erecting an altar sacrificing thereon and imploring mercy until the raging plague was stayed. Or Elijah when, *he prayed earnestly that it might not rain and it rained not on the earth but by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit.* But it is unnecessary to multiply instances of this kind for the intercessions of Moses to which our text refers are sufficient for our present purpose, sufficient to establish this position - that the irreligious part of society are greatly dependant upon the prayers of Christians. This is the point aimed at in this discourse and which we shall now endeavor to illustrate.

But it will be well before entering upon the subject to show who are meant by the irreligious part of society. And in general terms we mean all who are not real Christians. This includes not alone the openly corrupt - the thief the defrauder the liar the adulterer and the like: but also many a moral and amiable man. We mean those who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof - and those who live without a habit of prayer however regular and exact their morality - and those who substitute an amiable disposition - or speculative believe - or deeds of charity for a humbling self self-scrutinizing principle of piety. Although there is a great diversity among these different characters as it relates to this world yet there is one characteristic common to all - they are wanting in love to God, a characteristic so important and radical that it groups them all into one great class - and that is a want of love to God. This deficiency in the first principle of religion leaves all these descriptions of men the proper subjects of prayer since they are stamped with that alienation from God which exposes them to his righteous indignation.

We now revert to our proposition that the irreligious part of society are greatly dependant upon the

prayers of Christians.

And in the first place they are dependant upon these prayers for many temporal mercies.

When Christian nations that have long been blessed with the light and privileges of the Gospel wane worse and worse - when their inequities are multiplied and only one be found here and there doing justice and loving mercy - why does not God pour upon those nations the vials of his wrath, and strip them of their distinguished blessings? One principal reason why God is thus forbearing is because in those nations he discovers a few that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of them. The case of Sodom is an illustration of this principle. Had there been found ten righteous within its walls the fire of the Lord had not consumed it. And in Christ's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem he says, *And except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

And adducing instances of this kind from the bible to prove that God often spares nations from destruction or calamity on account of the piety and the prayers of a few, we are sensible that some will perceive a difficulty. For they consider most of the events related in the Scriptures as miraculous - as produced by a particular interposition of God under a particular dispensation - and therefore these events will not apply to the present state of the world. When miracles have ceased and God governs by general laws, the destruction of Sodom was indeed strictly and eminently miraculous: but in the case of Jerusalem there is no evidence of the suspension or counteraction of any of the laws of nature and this is essential to what we call a miracle. There might indeed have been a divine influence exerted upon the councils and dispositions of the actors in that bloody tragedy. But this was unknown to them nor did it infringe at all upon their liberty of thought or action. And why may not this same sort of influence be exerted upon the present rulers of the world - so that while they are pursuing their own chosen way God is fulfilling his purposes in their actions. Or by withholding his influence and suffering the rulers of this world to walk after the council of their own heart, God may often accomplish important designs. As in the case of Pharaoh he hardened his heart by withdrawing the strivings of his Spirit.

Now the prosperous or adverse conditions of nations depend almost entirely upon measures adopted by the government. When therefore God wishes to bless the nation he may dispose its rulers to adopt those measures that shall result in its prosperity - and when he would punish a nation he may abandon its rulers to their own evil councils. This is all the influence exerted by God upon the present nations of the world for which we contend in this discourse. He may indeed interpose for the preservation or distinction of kingdoms in other ways and indeed by miracles: but the influence which he exerts upon the minds or hearts of rulers is enough for our present purpose. Granting this influence it is easy to see how many ways God may answer the prayers of his elect who cry unto him day and night for the nation in which they live. Are the rulers disposed to engage in war? He can dispose them to peace. Are they inclined to oppress and defraud their subjects? He can soften their stubborn hearts. Are they negligent and indifferent to the welfare of their people? He can inspire them with resolution and perseverance.

But it is not in a national view alone that the irreligious part of society experience mercies through the prayers of Christians. The hearts of all men are in *the hands of the Lord and he turneth them as the rivers of water are turned.* And when the irreligious experience kindness or protection in their intercourse with society this may result from the influences of God's Spirit given in answer to the prayers of Christians whereby many a heart naturally ferocious and unfeeling is disposed to be merciful and compassionate. And it may be that this same grace has subdued the ferocity of some monster of iniquity who had already sharpened his assassin dagger to plunge into the heart of the man who lives without prayer

and without God. So that in these and many other ways even the security which sinners enjoy in a Christian land may have been procured to them by the prayers of the pious.

We hasten in the second place to say that sinners are dependant upon the prayers of Christians for many spiritual mercies.

When a Christian prays for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the extension of the Gospel he is certain that he asks those things that are agreeable to the will of God. For he hath declared that *every knee shall bow to him and every tongue confess to God*. When he supplicates for temporal blessings he knows not but he ask for those things that would be injurious or inconsistent with the will of God to grant. But such a doubt does not rise in his mind when he brings a fellow sinner in the arms of prayer to the mercy seat and beseeches God to convert and save him. Prayer indeed has chiefly to do with our Spiritual concerns and here is its greatest efficacy exhibited. When Christians restrain prayer before God, what do we find is the consequence? Religion in their own heart is at its lowest ebb and sinners around them press on careless and unworried in the broad road to destruction. But when Christians shake off the Spirit of slumber and receive a spirit of supplication from on high - what is then the consequence. They arise and trim their lamps and seem indeed like a city set on a hill that cannot be hid And the effect does not terminate here. Sinners also begin to hear the voice of the Son of God and arise from the dead. And the enquiry is *men and brethren what shall we do?*

Here then do you perceive my hearers that where Christians cease to pray, sinners cease to be alarmed and drop into eternity unforgiven and unsanctified - but when a spirit of prayer is revived within them it brings down in answer to their supplications the awakening Spirit of God to soften the flinty heart and implant within it immortal principles. These prayers then offered up in the name of Christ where the means of the sinners conversion. Had they never been presented he would have remained and are alien from the commonwealth of Israel and dead in trespasses and sins. And no regenerated man can say that the Spirit was not given him in consequence of some Christian prayers. Some pious friend might long have made intercession *with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death and was heard and that he feared*. God does indeed convert some almost without means: yet as a general fact it may confidently be maintained that the prayers of his children are the condition on which he bestows regenerating grace. So that in a secondary sense it depends upon the prayers of Christians whether the religious part of society be ever converted.

There are two inferences which we can scarcely avoid making in the conclusion of this subject. And first if so many mercies spiritual and temporal flow to the sinner through the intercession of Christians, how grateful should he be for their prayers and how anxious to have them redoubled in his behalf! Leave out for a moment the consideration of temporal advantage and look at the single fact that such prayer is maybe the means of procuring for this sinner the regenerating grace of God. Here is a translation from darkness to light - from the dominion of sin and Satan and death to the service in favor of God - a deliverance from an exposure to everlasting perdition and a restoration to the hope of eternal happiness. Yet this mighty revolution can perhaps be produced through the instrumentality of fervent effectual prayer. And the Christian unasked goes into his closet again and again to supplicate so rich a blessing for the sinner. Is not here a cause for gratitude? Shall a deed so noble and disinterested meet with no return? Shall the sinner not even manifest anxiety that such prayers may be repeated? Alas my hearers, what do facts teach us? Did you ever see any evidence of such a feeling of gratitude in the bosom of the unregenerate - or even the very smallest solicitude to secure such a favor unless it were in the in the hour of sickness or danger? On the contrary, when he sees the humble devoted servant of Christ praying for his conversion does there not arise within a feeling of resentment?

But in the second place there is no reason to dissuade the Christian from supplicating mercy for the irreligious man. On the contrary it is a motive for urging the request with greater fervency. For it shows such a blindness and insensibility - such a headstrong tendency to destruction as must awaken all the sympathies of him who has drank into the Spirit of Christ. Christians, it may be your prayers for this man will be heard in heaven and he be restored by your instrumentality to light life and immortality. O it is an animating thought and it should awaken within you the wrestling Spirit of Jacob and the earnest supplication of Elijah. There is placed in your hands a more powerful engine than ever the proudest and mightiest conquerors obtained. They indeed have triumphed over all the united energies of man and hurled earthly monarchs from their thrones. But it is given to you to trample down a mightier foe even the Prince of Darkness.

*And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

Prayer is indeed that instrument in the hand of God which is to break down the empire of darkness and establish the empire of righteousness. Why then do not Christians use it more faithfully? Why do they not make one vigorous and persevering effort that shall at once bury the strong towers of irreligion in ruins!

Delivered

At Conway December 1820

## Sermon 28 Neglect of Vows

[Sermon No. 28, "Neglect of Vows," Ecclesiastes 5:4, 1820 Sep,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 5]

Ecclesiastes 5:4

*When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it;  
for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.*

There is scarcely an individual in all the immensely varied conditions of human society who does not in some hour our danger or distress realize the want and the value of religion. The stormless hours of existence may indeed be passed without looking beyond the little smiling landscape around us – but when our horizon begins to blacken with the Tempest and the thunder to break over our heads we involuntarily stretch our thoughts to some happier sky that is never overcast with storms and sigh that our dwelling is not beneath it. To drop the metaphor - though man may be forgetful of futurity when every thing around him is pleasant and prosperous yet sickness and pain and sorrow and calamity bring with them a feeling of religion. They strip off the veil that concealed the deformity of the world from our view and hold it before us naked and unsatisfying. We feel that something more is wanting to fill up the void that is made in our hearts and when we cast our lives over every limit of this our moral habitation, we perceive that there is but one thing which can possibly afford us relief - and that is religion. Could we feel that God were our father – that between him and our souls there were no interval - no controversy we might indeed rest serenely beneath his almighty arm and bid defiance to all the calamities of life. But this God is a stranger to us. We have never sought him in earnest and conscience will not permit us to believe that a mere wish now in the day of adversity will procure us his favour - when we have neglected to seek him all the years of our prosperity. We are convinced and the bible stamps a certainty upon our convictions that there must be a revolution within us - a change in the inner and outer man. Our past life does not satisfy us. We are sure such a life would not ease us to heaven and that it must be radically altered. These reflections These reflections revolve within us for a time while we are under the pressure of affliction and they produce many unavailing regrets - many sighs of repentance over our misspent days. We must proceed to the forming of resolutions. O should God spare our lives this once - should he avert this danger and restore us to our former state we are determined to pursue a different course - to act henceforth with an habitual reference to to eternity. In other words we are led to vow a vow unto God – a vow made in the most solemn manner - in the presence of heaven and earth.

The Christian also in seasons of unusual distress, finds by a review of his life that he is not lived as a stranger and sojourner on earth and being led to deep repentance because he has so often crucified that Lord afresh he renews his former resolutions before God and binds himself anew and if possible by a more sacred and solemn vow. Indeed my hearers who of us whether Christians or not has not formed resolutions of amendment when sickness or calamity had weakened our hold on the world? And now upon reading our text, *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it*, the question forces itself upon us, have we carried into effect these resolutions - have we fulfilled these vows? What if we should now institute an enquiry into the subject - and searching the storehouse of our memories, take a retrospect of every season of trial darkness and affliction through which we have passed? Such an enquiry it is our object in the first place to assist in bringing to your view a few instances of these of adversity and then secondly to present before you the motives that urge to the immediate performance

of every unpaid vow.

Our first business then is to endeavor to hold up to your view some of those seasons of adversity when your soften hearts felt the value of the bible and vowed vows before the King of heaven. We do not indeed hope to point out the particular case of any individual: but perhaps we may be able to trace some feelings that were common to many of us.

And do not some of us my hearers remember a period when a sudden check was given to our efforts and a damp to our spirits by leveling blow of disappointment? The object of our most ardent pursuit seemed almost within our reach and appeared beautiful and excellent with our most vigorous efforts. We had already doted much upon it anticipated possession and it had cost us many a wearisome and many sleepless hour. In the evening we saw it almost within our grasp and never did it appear so lovely. In the morning it had vanished. It might have been wealth or honor or pleasure or friendship. But no matter what it was now gone - and there was left within us an emptiness nothing mortal could supply - and a distress nothing earthly could alleviate. We looked around on the world but a few hours before so beautified and enchanting and it was desolate without a single object on which we could turn the eye with pleasure. The visionary fetish of our hopes had in one hour had been trampled into ruins - beauty had been converted into deformity - fertility into barrenness and life into death.

Perhaps the man who met this disappointment was a Christian. And when the object of his most constant pursuit had thus eluded his grasp there was time left for reflection. He looked back upon what once was when God in heaven were foremost in his thoughts and affections and felt for the first time how widely he had wandered from duty - how he had suffered the creature to usurp the place of the Creator, how he *had crucified the Son of God afresh and done despite unto the Spirit of grace*. And yet that God whose compassions fail not had lengthened out his forfeited existence, watching over him with the same fatherly care and supplying all his wants during this season of backsliding rebellion and idolatry. O how keen is the sense of ingratitude which now seizes his heart when he makes this comparison between his treason and God's kindness! Repentance deep and unmixed humbles him in the dust - and with all the energy of returning affection he devotes himself anew to the service of God and resolves henceforth the march forward in the path of duty trampling the world the flesh and the Devil under his feet. But Christians how is it with you now? Have those vows been performed? And are those resolutions the continued rule of your life? Or are you again seized with a Spirit of slumber and traveling again the same wayward path.

But perhaps the man who felt the pain of disappointment was not a Christian. Yet in that season of desolation he could not avoid the thoughts of religion. The Spirit of grace was then pressing the subject home upon his heart and when he looked back upon his past life his soul sickened and when he look forward his soul trembled. He sees religion reaching forth one hand to his relief while with the other she points to heaven. And now most resolutely does he determine to accept proffered assistance. And many a vow of amendment and change of life passes his lips and is registered in heaven. Man of the world, those vows are still recorded there, but are they performed? Why then are you now as eager and ardent as ever in chase of this world's vanities?

It may be however that some of us are not sensible of any great loss in any anticipated comforts. We may actually have attained them and enjoyed them for a course of years. Prosperity may have rolled upon us its full full tide and we borne up by its smooth stream may have been carried on to fortune and subliminary happiness. Every thing around us has been calm and everything before us inviting. The breezes of health and hope have blown gently and steadily upon us and we had almost forgotten that



this was a world of waves and tempests. But in an unexpected hour the storm has risen around us and poured its fury upon our heads, and we have been driven shipwrecked and naked upon a barren and inhospitable shore. Is this figurative language too strong? Let him answer who has been reduced in one day from wealth to poverty - or him who has sunk from an honorable station in society into contempt - or him whose heart is yet bleeding by the wounds of treacherous friendship.

Now the effect of these strokes of calamity upon the heart is very similar to that where anticipated happiness proves to be a phantom. Was the man a Christian? He perceives that the comforts of which he is now deprived had become his idol and that God has now taken them away in mercy to prevent his final apostasy. He therefore acquiesces in the Divine conduct and resolves henceforth to worship God only. And the enquiry which we wish to urge home upon such a man is, whether these vows have been performed?

The same question we put to the man who has experienced similar losses of some of his most valuable earthly possessions if he were not a Christian. For these calamities no doubt produced the firmest resolutions of amendment and therefore O man, *the vows of the Lord are upon you and you cannot go back.*

But so obdurate is man's heart that outward losses and disappointments do not always soften it into a religious frame. And therefore God touches him in a more vulnerable point. *Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will be given for his life.* Hence when God *puts forth his hand and touches his bone in his flesh*, few very few are there whose hearts are not touch also. Though none of us in health ever formally deny the truth of the proposition that we are constantly exposed to death, yet our conduct evinces that this truth does not reach our hearts. There is a certain giddiness or perversity within us and so much false glare about us and our eyes are ordinarily as much averted from our own dissolution as if it were never to take place. But when an unrelenting disease comes upon us and the vigorous arm becomes nerveless the bright eye sunk and heavy and the whole frame in pieces with pain - it is astonishing how everything earthly and everything heavenly changes to our view. This world and all its glory which but a few hours before had risen up before us so beautifully and magnificently occupying the whole soul is now diminished to a point and religion seems to us to be all in all. Conscience irresistibly turns back our eyes upon our past lives and what if this be the first time we have taken such a retrospect? Do we find nothing in them that alarms us? Has self had no undue predominancy in our motions and actions? Does the tenor of our conduct look as if the love of God were the regulating principle? O no! This hour an hour of sickness, when we are forced to the brink of the grave, will not flatten us nor deceive us. And is there no one of us who can remember how appalling in that hour was the picture of past life - how like an uncultivated field it seemed barren of every useful plant and covered over with unprofitable or poisonous weeds? O how earnest was he to be restored again to health that he might have an opportunity of exhibiting an altered life before the world! Would God have mercy on him but this once and rebuke his disease then when he sound forth the praises of preserving and redemption in that great congregation and never never could he forget so great mercy or cease to regulate his conduct by the will of God. Perhaps God listened to his supplications and rebuked his disease. And once more do we now urge the question upon his heart have not these so ardent vows been forgotten - have they *not passed away like the morning cloud and the early dew?*

And does not this representation recall to the mind of some Christians an unperformed forgotten resolution of the greater diligence which the near prospect of death forced upon his heart? When his hold on the earth was failing him he perceived that he had no sure hold on heaven. He fancied indeed that he was fastened to the cross but there was a grossness and a dimness before his Spiritual eyes and

a bluntness upon his Spiritual senses so that all to him was uncertainty. He might be deceived and he now saw that sin had blinded his eyes and blunted his feelings. He longed therefore to live yet a while to shake off this drowsiness and to clear his vision by the tears of repentance. He lives - but does he repent - does he strive more earnestly to enter in at the strait gate? These are questions we wish him to decide.

There is no tie that fastens man more firmly to the world than friendship in all its multiplied forms of father and mother wife and husband brother and sister brother and sister friend and friend. When therefore this tie is cut asunder we feel as if we were almost loosened from the earth. And that it is often thus separated the garments of mourning in every congregation will testify. There is not however any other season of adversity better calculated to show us the emptiness of the world and to turn our thoughts inward upon our hearts than when a friend as it were a part of ourselves is torn from us by death.

Shall I appeal to that father or mother who had been called to witness the last this sickness and the last struggles of a beloved child? How think he did this world look to them as they watched the expiring spark of life and saw it go out? The world! It was in that hour a desolate spot and they wished to remain in it only that they might devote themselves more unremittingly to the service of their Redeemer. Yet what would be the answer of those parents if they were now asked whether the world did not again steal upon their affections and gradually obliterate their religious resolutions.

Or if these parents were not Christians they saw their child, perhaps, passing to eternity with no hope of heaven - while they remembered that they had never instructed him in religion nor offered up a single fervent effectual prayer for his spiritual welfare. This was a bitter aggravation of their anguish and it could not fail of awakening within them the most fixed determination of amendment. Alas! Can it be believed that their other children are suffered to live on in the same neglected state?

Or shall I call upon the widow to bear testimony to the truth of my remarks? The memory no doubt is full of that most agonizing hour when a husband a protector a friend turned upon her that last look of affection and closed his eyes forever. Soon as this first burst of grief was assuaged and she cast a look upon the world about her and saw that she was left alone, feeble and heartless to struggle against its winds and its waves, oh how did her spirit shrink from the effort and flee to her heavenly Father for succour and how fervently and entirely did she consecrate herself to his service. Religion! O it was her only hope her only refuge - her only delight. She felt as if the world were trodden under her feet - as if her spiritual conflicts were over. The best hours of the day and the sleepless hours of the night were spent in such communion with her heavenly Father. And was it possible she could have ever grow weary of this sublime service and condescend again to feed on the husks of this world? Alas you have the answer in that sigh which she breathes forth at the recollection of those sacred days and of the many vows she then made which remain yet unperformed.

Under the second head of this discourse we were to present motives urging to the immediate performance of unpaid vows. And we urge to this course of conduct.

First because these vow are recorded in heaven.

What is a religious vow? it is in fact a covenant between God and man. A person in a certain situation feeling his dependance on God promises to perform certain conditions if God will please in His providence to bring about certain other things. When we are sick for instance we engage to devote ourselves to the service of God if he will recover our health. Now when we are thus recovered we have a

manifestation that this covenant is entered into on the part of our Maker and the conditions of it performed. And as we proposed the conditions and terms of it we have surely no reason to complain of them. It is right therefore that this law should be registered in heaven and remain sacredly binding upon us until performed. Alas the great the Almighty God condescended to permit mere dust and ashes to prescribe the conditions of a covenant - and has he also performed on his part these conditions and will he now suffer us to break it with impunity? Will he obliterate it from the book of remembrance? No my brethren, that vow is marked with a pen of iron. All heaven is witness to it and unless it be fulfilled they will stand forth as evidence against us in the great day of accounts. And this constitutes a second motive to the performance of unpaid vows. Because they will be exhibited against us in the day of judgment.

In this world we are permitted to rest secure in unconcerned while many a vow is unperformed. Our hearts perhaps are the only witnesses on earth - and our hearts are deceitful above all things. They hide these resolutions and promises from our view or persuade us that they are of small importance and thus do we press on year after year with a lie in our right hand. God does not awaken us because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness - and our consciences do not disturb us because the world has rendered them invulnerable. But my hearers, that day of God, that hour of universal scrutiny, will come at last. And when the shout of the archangel and the trump of God shall arouse the dead - when these heavens and this earth shall be on fire - rolling together as a scroll - when the elements are melting and the last pillar of nature is falling - in the midst of all this uproar and desolation how can we bear the thought that we have not fulfilled a covenant made with that God who sits behind and hurls these thunders? And when this final storm is over and the tribunal of God rises on the wreck of the universe and the stillness of the judgment succeeds to the crashing of nature and the records of heaven are opened - how can our fainting souls endure the challenge of Omnipotence, *the vows of the Lord are upon thee and thou cannot go back - He hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast owed*. Yes, my brethren, it is true that of our vows be not fulfilled in this life they must be paid at the judgment - if not paid at the judgment we shall pay them in the regions of despair.

Delivered

At Longmeadow September 3 1820

At Springfield September 16<sup>th</sup> 1820

At Deerfield North Parish September 1820

At Greenfield December 1820

At Conway January 7<sup>th</sup> 1821

## Sermon 29 [The Holy and the Unholy]

[Sermon No. 29, "The Holy and the Unholy," Ezekiel 44:23; Malachi 3:18, 1820 Dec, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 5]

Ezekiel 44:23

*And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.*

*Obvious marks of difference between the righteous and the wicked.*

Malachi 3: 18

*Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between the him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*

It is curious to observe with how much vigor and boldness the writers of the bible [New Testament] mark off the whole human race into two great classes - the righteous and the wicked or the holy and unholy. They [not only] declare these two descriptions of men not only to be different but represent this difference to be great as that between light and darkness death and life. And to irreligious men there is not a greater mystery than this in the Gospel. When they look at the moral and amiable around them who make no pretensions to religion and compare their conduct with that of many who profess to belong to Christ they cannot see any such broad distinction and therefore looking no farther the external appearance they conclude there is none. Indeed there is a constant effort among the irreligious part of society to narrow the distinction between religion and the world till at length they are blended - till the line is drawn between the moral and immoral shall also be universally the line between the religious and irreligious - in other words to make religion a mere system of morals. And even some Christians who are in very lukewarm state almost deserted by the Spirit of God are often perplexed to discern between the righteous and the wicked and are disposed to consider that those expressions used by Christ and the Apostles (the sacred writers) on this subject to be exaggerated. It may be profitable therefore to exhibit some of those discriminating points by which the holy righteous are universally to be discerned from the unholy wicked and he that serveth him him not. We do not intend to point out all the real differences between sinners and saints because some of the most important characteristics of the Christian are so frequently counterfeited that even a very good men are at a loss to know whether they possess them.

Other characteristics again are possessed by most Christians and yet we might hesitate to say whether it were impossible a man should be a Christian without them. We mean to fix our eyes upon a few very obvious and important things the possession of which no inconsiderable evidence of a regenerated heart and the event of which is good evidence of a sinful heart.

In entering upon the subject we remark that the grand distinction between the wicked and the righteous between the holy and unholy is that the one loves God and the other does not. Without this principle no man can be a Christian: with it he cannot be otherwise. By nature all men are destitute of

this love and all the strivings of unaided nature cannot fix it in the heart. It comes *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. It is shed abroad in the heart of the Holy Ghost* and is the sum and substance of regeneration: For it is in the foundation principle of the new heart and produces all other holy exercises and actions. This love then constitutes the grand and universal distinction between the saint and sinner. But this is not the point on which we mean now to insist - that is in an abstract manner. We wish to look rather to the effects of love to God - and some of those displays of this in the life and feelings by which we prove its existence in the heart. For such displays are indeed the only evidence we can have the existence of this principle within us.

The first characteristic then by which the righteous is distinguished from the wicked [or the holy from the unholy] is that the one has a deep sense of his own sinfulness and of the evil of sin while the other has not. The real Christian feels that his *heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*. He feels sin within him a body of death clinging to his best services. He suspects himself to be the chief of sinners - and when he compares his conduct and feelings with the laws of God he fears lest he offend in every point and is actuated altogether by selfishness. This penetrating sense of his sinfulness sinks him in the dust before an holy God and he mourns over his blindness of mind and hardness of heart over his innumerable sins of omission and commission and in the sincere language of penitence he cries out, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. And these contrite feelings result not alone from a view of the immense number of his sins; but also from a sense of the extreme evil and demerit of any sin when committed against an all holy and all merciful God. The whole of God's nature is opposed to it - all his attributes of mercy have been displayed to man to dissuade him from sin and all his attributes of justice revealed to warn him from its commission. If therefore in the face of all these mercies and all these terrors man persists in violating the law of God, there is no measure to the enormity of his conduct unless it be infinity. This sentiment does the Christian feel deeply. And knowing that he has sinned and still continues to sin he *dare not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven*.

Mark now how widely different are the feelings and sentiments of the irreligious man. He will not deny indeed that he has infirmities and that he is guilty of some sins. But he does not feel that they are very numerous or very great. They do not press upon his heart like some enormous load from which he longs and strives to be freed. He does not feel within him an obstinate contest between the old and the new man - a law in his members warning against the law of his mind. And he cannot conceive how those small sins of which he is guilty should be so enormous and evil in the sight of God. That God is infinitely exalted above all the effect of these sins and they cannot retard for one moment the designs of his government. Why then should he punish so severely a few departures from rectitude in a being who is so weak and so tempted as a man? This man cannot feel that his sins deserve so much severity and that God who is represented to him as threatening everlasting perdition not only to the sinful acts of man but even to the ungratified sinful desires such a being appears to him as unmerciful - *as reaping when he has not sowed*.

Now this so thinking difference in the feelings of these two men on this subject shows that the one has been made to see the depravity of his heart and the holiness of God's law which the other has not - in other words it renders it probable that the one is a Christian while the other is dead in trespasses and sins. Real converts indeed differ in their sense of their own sinfulness: but they all agree in this, that they are deserving of the everlasting punishment of a righteous God. For this feeling lies at the very turning point of conversion.

The second mark of distinction between the righteous and the sinful [the holy and the unholy] is that the one finds a delight in the society of Christians and in their pious conversation while the other does

not. John makes love to the brethren the decision test of regeneration. *We know says he that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.* Now to love any being implies a delight in his society. And Christians are traveling on the same narrow path - struggling with similar difficulties by the way and destined to the same home at last. Shall they not be gratified then in each other's society? Look at the travellers upon the same road on earth. How soon will they learn each other's destination and how it gratifies one to find another going to the same point as himself! He immediately feels an attachment for this man and they derive much comfort and assistance in discussing the distance the conveniences and in conveniences the security and the danger of the wayward and in deriving plans for their most speedy advance. So the Christian in a higher sense rejoices to meet with a kindred spirit advancing like himself through the wilderness of this world on the path to heaven. He feels strengthened - to advance with great alacrity and to overcome the difficulties in his way. The men of this world being like a dead weight upon his progress - but he has now found one who will encourage him and advance hand in hand and heart with heart.

*Their fears, their hopes, their aims are one  
 Their comfort in their cares.  
 They share their mutual woes  
 Their mutual burdens bear  
 And often for each other flows  
 The sympathizing tear. [Hymn by John Fawcett, 1782]*

When the real Christian perceives in any one around him the genuine Spirit of Christ - no matter whether he be rich or poor, polished or unpolished, learned or ignorant - no matter of what grade or colour or nation this Christian will experience towards him a love a complacency. It is not an esteem for his person or wildly or worldly greatness: but it is a love for the soul of the man. He sees in him a brother and anticipates a delightful union with him in a purer world. And he takes a pleasure in his conversation upon religion. For there is a general sameness in all regenerated hearts however modified by minor circumstances. There is a certain something stamped upon each of them by which they know one another and are drawn together. In a spot so full of obstruction to their Spiritual welfare as is this world where they must maintain a constant warfare with foes within and without how can it be otherwise there unpleasant for those who are the children of the same Father to sit down and discuss all these subjects to strengthen each other's hand and encourage each other's hearts to *run with patients the race that is set before them* and to enquire of each other the grounds of their hope in Christ and to dwell with the delight on the scenes that await the righteous beyond the grave.

But my brother and these are not the marks of the character of the unregenerated. He does not indeed object to hear the subject of religion discussed in the pulpit but it gives him pain to sit down with a devoted Christian and engage in a thorough enquiry upon experimental religion. And most of all does he dread any questions that relate to the state of his own heart. So long as the subject is some speculative point on which he can display his ingenuity by caviling he is not unwilling to converse upon it. But when the enquiry becomes practical and therefore personal - when it is urged home by asking him whether his Spiritual comfort increase or decrease - whether his own depravity of hearts becomes more sensible - whether the struggle in his heart between sin and holiness is more or less arduous - whether Christ appears to him as *the chief among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely* - whether the secret exercises of his heart are more or less pure and holy - whether he delights more in secret meditation upon God and heaven and in communion with him and whether upon the whole he believes himself to be Christian - such enquiries as these even if made by an intimate friend, are most offensive and

disgusting to the unrenewed heart. The Christian is pleased with such questions because they probe his heart and tend to awaken him from any false security. If he be not a son of God he wishes to know it before it be too late. But there is nothing more offensive to the irreligious man than those plain practical Christians which serve to show him his sinfulness and his danger. He often trembles when in the society of devoted Christians lest they should put such enquiries to him. It is a language he does not understand. It is in his view the language of mystery and fanaticism and he feels his whole heart rising against it.

If then the irreligious man does not take pleasure in the society of the devoted Christian he cannot love him. As an upright and honest member of society he may indeed respect him and if he will let religion alone he does not feel averse to his conversation. But when he witnesses his bold and zealous exertions in the cause of Christ there springs up in his heart a feeling of disgust if not of hatred. And he is led to ridicule and condemn this servant of God for his zeal in the cause of Christ. This zeal he regards as fanaticism and he can have no complacency in the man so superstitious and bigoted. But as already observed the Apostle John makes love to Christians a discriminating mark of regeneration. Whenever therefore a man feels a disgust or resentment towards an eminently devoted servant of God it is strong evidence that his heart is yet unsanctified.

We are led very naturally on this palace place to state a third distinctive feeling between him *that serveth God and him that serveth him not*. The one rejoices in the conversion of sinners and the other does not. An irreligious man might indeed be gratified by learning that an abandoned profligate or Son or relative had embraced religion because this would produce a reformation of life and thus restore him to respectability in this world. And parents in general desire the happiness of their children and if religion can make them so they do not seriously object to their embracing it even if themselves are destitute of it though they do not really believe that it has any such efficacy. But aside from these peculiar cases the irreligious man does not rejoice in the conversion of sinners. Let him be told of a stranger lately living careless and unconcerned and trusting to his amiableness and morality for salvation but now brought broken hearted to submit to Christ and he will receive no pleasure from the information. He will consider it all a fit of enthusiasm and secretly wish the man may prove a hypocrite that his opinion may be confirmed. And when he learns that a former companion of himself of similar sceptical views has embraced religion he forms the like conclusion. Or when it is told him that a general seriousness prevails in some particular region, instead of rejoicing he will most earnestly desire that such a feeling which he supposes to be mere animal impulse may not extend. And when he looks around him and sees multitudes giving decisive evidence of their irreligion, perhaps there never enters his heart a serious wish to see them converted.

But how widely different are the feelings of the real Christians! Wherever an immortal soul is rescued from the dominion of sin and turned towards God no matter how suddenly and in what manner the revolution be affected, this man rejoices – nay there is a thrill of joy running through his breast: for he regards every instance of conversion as a triumph of truth over error - of grace over nature - of religion over the powers of darkness. And most earnestly does he desire to see the glorious work carried on *till every sinner shall bow to Christ and every tongue confess to God*.

We now proceed to state a fourth distinction whereby the righteous may be discerned from the wicked. And this is their different habits and feelings in relation to prayer. This is a very important mark in fixing the boundaries, *between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not*.

Prayer is most emphatically and correctly called the breath of the Christian. We care not what are the

professions of a man, if he lead a prayerless life he also leads a sinful life. Point me to the man who does not pray and I will point to one who does not fear God. Point me to one who does not fear God and I will point to one who is a slave to sin and a candidate for perdition.

We are not saying however that no irreligious man prays. In the hour of danger or distress when he can no longer cling to the world - when all his earthly supports are failing him, he turns his thoughts towards God, not because he loves him but because he sees no other quarter from which he can possibly obtain relief. Let his danger or distress be removed and God is banished from his thoughts. He ceases to pray - and here is the grand distinction between him and the Christian - he does not always call upon God - nor does he do this habitually - but only when forced to it. This therefore is not praying in the Holy Ghost. These are the prayers which are an abomination in the sight of God.

There is not indeed a perfect uniformity in the Christian's prayers. He is sometimes left in a stupid formal state - and at other times finds his whole soul drawn out in prayer before the mercy seat - but he prays habitually - he does this for years - nay as long as he lives - in prosperity as well as in adversity in health as well as in sickness - and herein lies the wide difference between him and the sinner.

There is another circumstance concerning prayer wherein they differ. Christians are pleased when their brethren pray for them. They believe in the efficacy of prayer and feel the need of the intercessions of others. But this is not the case with the unregenerated. In seasons of afflictions indeed they do not object to the Christians prayers in their behalf. But in the time of health and prosperity, they have no wish may they are unwilling to be carried in the arms of prayer by the devoted Christian to the mercy seat. They feel as if he were interfering with those things that concern only himself and his God - and besides they look upon such a procedure as an act of enthusiasm and wholly unavailing.

These my hearers are some of the most obvious characteristics by which the righteous are distinguished from the wicked. And are they not plain marks? Is there much difficulty in applying them to ourselves? It cannot be difficult to determine whether we regard sin as a very great or a small evil - whether we look upon our own hearts as desperately wicked or as moderately so - whether we are pleased with Christian society and conversation - whether we rejoice at the conversion of sinners - whether we pray in secret daily and whether we wish to have Christians pray for us. When we are told that love to God is the foundation principle of every Christian obedience, we may be at a loss to determine whether this be the motive of our actions: because the human heart invents so many comes counterfeits of this love. But here are certain feelings and actions which it is not easy to counterfeit or mistake. We do not say indeed that it is impossible for a man should not be a Christian who imagines he can trace in his heart and life all these feelings and actions. But we maintain that in ordinary cases these would be no contemptible evidence of his Christian state unless the indulgence of some habitual sins furnished a contrary proof. And on the other hand we maintain that the want of these feelings and actions is a decisive evidence of the want of religion. What! A Christian without a sense of his own sinfulness - without a love of Christian society - without any joint at the conversion of sinners - and above all without prayer! No! Experience declares it impossible! The Bible declares it impossible and stamps upon the forehead of that man the sentence of Belshazzar - *thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting!*

Delivered

At Conway December 3 1820



## Sermon 35 Reasons Why God Spares the Wicked

[Sermon No. 35, "Reasons Why God Spares the Wicked," Job 21:7, 1821 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 5]

Job 21:7

*Wherefore do the wicked live?*

The most unlearned Christian is better qualified for answering this question than the wisest philosopher. It is indeed as difficult now as ever to unaided reason: but the bible has put into our hands a clew in some of its plainest declarations, for giving at least a partial solution of this enquiry. We are there taught that God, *worketh all things after the council of his own will - that the hairs of our heads are all numbered - that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His notice and that He causes the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder of wrath he restrains*. In other words we learn that every saint is ordered and directed by an all perfect God that in forming the universe He had a certain design in view and that he so controls every occurrence as to promote this design. Hence then when the enquiry is made, *wherefore do the wicked live?* the Christian may answer, *they live to fulfill the purposes of God*. To prove and illustrate this principle will be the object of this discourse.

So far as we can judge from the book of nature and the book of revelations the only objects for which God created the Universe were to display his own glory and to bestow the greatest possible happiness upon his creatures. And in the Divine administration we may hence presume that these two objects are kept steadily in view and that every event is made conducive to their advancement. The permission of natural and moral evil in the creation might to our limited faculties appear to contradict this position. For we know that sin is opposed to God's glory and ruinous to the creatures happiness. It would seem therefore most wise in God to sweep it at once with an annihilating blast of his nostrils from the universe - and that He should continue in existence the wicked who are opposed to his glory for the purpose of promoting his glory at first sight a contradiction. But *God's ways are not as our ways nor his thoughts as our thoughts*. We believe indeed that this subject in its full extent cannot be taken in by a finite mind - certainly not by any human mind. There are some instances however in which we can see how the continuance of wickedness and of the wicked in existence is promotive of God's purposes. And some of these instances it is object to bring to view at this time.

And first the wicked live to display the mercy of God.

This is indeed a most triumphant and wonderful display. You have often been astonished no doubt in reading the history of the Israelites particularly during their passage to the wilderness that their uninterrupted disobedience rebellion and defiance of God did not provoke him to forsake them and utterly to exterminate them from the face of the earth. So constantly did they experience miraculous interference for their protection and so unequivocally were the laws of God made known to them that they were utterly without excuse for their transgressions. But my hearers the history of the Israelites is the history of the world - the history of our own hearts. *As in water face answereth to face so the heart of man to man*. Over the face of this whole world there is a wide a settled and universal alienation from

the love and service of God - and a banded rebellion against his government. Excepting those whom his Spirit has reconciled *there is none righteous no not one*. And this hostility which exists within us against God is no more excusable than the perverseness of the Jews. For we have not only the clearest revelation of this law as did the Israelites but we have also the added the brighter light of the Gospel. And the evidence that the bible is the revelation of God is so various and overwhelming that it was scarcely equalled by the miracles wrought in the immediate presence of his chosen people - nay we venture to say that if such miracles were wrought at the present day they would be no more conclusive in support of the Scriptures than is the evidence we now enjoy. *If we hear not Moses and the prophets neither should we be persuaded though one rose from the dead*. And when we take into view the great superiority of the Gospel dispensation over the Jewish we do not hesitate to say that the Jews had fewer modest obedience than are presented to us. But after all look at the world and see how little regard is paid to the bible and the will of God! Look at the overwhelming majority in all Christian lands, *walking in the sight of their own eyes and after the counsel of their own hearts*, and as dead to vital religion as if there were no God no Saviour - no heaven. Indeed the words of God to Israel will most apply to us - *Hear O heavens and give ear O earth: for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider. Judge I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard. What could've been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes brought it forth wild grapes?*

Notwithstanding all this indifference and positive opposition to the Gospel sinners are continued month after month year after year within its calls. Nay God pleads with them and warns them and exhorts them by his word his Spirit his ordinances and his providences to turn to the strong hold of safety and to accept of salvation as a free gift. Here is a display of forbearance at which man should be overwhelmed at which angels may be astonished and which God only can exercise.

Secondly the wicked live to display the power of the grace of God.

If a man saves the life of his most bitter enemy who is hunting his destruction we cannot but regard the deed as a most noble instance of moral excellence and must admire the character of the man. This feeling has often been excited within us when reading how David at the cave of Engedi cut off the skirt of Saul's garment and the next day called out to him and said, *behold this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee today into my hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee but mine eye spared thee and I said I will not put forth my hand against my Lord*. Such a generous deed melt even the persecuting and unrelenting spirit of Saul and forth from him the confession to David. *Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good whereas I have rewarded thee evil*. But my hearers, this instance of rewarding an enemy good for evil is not worth naming when compared with another case recorded in Scripture in which Saul and Tarsus fought against God. Being pulled up with the knowledge of a Jewish lawyer and being exceedingly enraged against the humble followers of Christ he obtained the commission from the chief priests and's seizing the torch of persecution he rushed forth in pursuit of the defenceless worshipers of God as a wolf among sheep. As we view him scouring through Judea and breathing forth threatenings and slaughter we cannot but enquire why does God suffer this furious madman to live? Why is he not struck down in the midst of his murderous career? and left on the plain like the wife of Lot a monument of divine vengeance? *O the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ!* This is indeed stricken down and made a monument - but it is a monument of divine grace. That Jesus whom he was persecuting had still compassion on him and arrested him with an almighty hand in his caves of blood - gives him another heart and the minister of Satan is converted into the minister of God - the murderer of Christians into their defender - the persecutor into the martyr and

Saul of Tarsus the enemy of the cross into Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ. This revolution so astonishing and complete whose effects have already reached from the rising to the setting sun and will be felt till the final shout of the archangel, this change was all the work of God and thousands in every age have *shouted grace grace onto it*.

Such is the power of divine grace and not only Saul has felt its almighty influence: but thousands in every successive age equally hostile to the truth as it is in Jesus and equally bent upon its expulsion from the world have been arrested and conquered and converted by the same Spirit - while the wondering world have admired and hated the change. And therefore it is that these have been suffered to live that God might have all the glory of their conversion and that men might know how vain it is to resist him in whose hands they are as the clay in the hands of the potter.

A third reason why the wicked are suffered to live is that God may use them as instruments of advancing his cause in the world.

After the death of Jacob in Egypt the brethren of Joseph supposed that he would revenge himself upon them for their treachery and cruelty and selling him to the Midianites. But Joseph said unto them *Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good to bring to pass as it is this day to save much people alive*. Here you perceive that the purpose of God was directly opposite to the opposite purpose of man - or in other words, he caused, *the wrath of man to praise him*. The brethren of Joseph had no other object in view than to glut their envy and jealousy. But God well this action as a means of preserving his church in the world by continuing in existence and increasing as the stars of heaven the seed of Abraham. Therefore it was that these cruel brethren of Joseph were suffered to live.

The Scripture history abounds with instances of a similar kind. The whole Jewish nation would have been destroyed for their rebellions in the wilderness had they not been the only people on earth that had been chosen to convey to posterity a knowledge of the true God and of a Saviour. And the same remark will apply to them at many other periods as when the ten tribes separated and when they were carried away captives to Babylon. In the days of our Saviour this nation had become so corrupt that nothing could have saved them from destruction, but the fact that they were the appointed people who were to crucify the Lord of glory and were thus to be made instruments introducing the Gospel among all nations. And it is a curious fact that while they were doing everything in their power to prevent this they were in fact taking the most effectual measures for its establishment and diffusion. By crucifying Christ they at once fulfilled the Scriptures and prostrated the separating wall that had so long stood between them and the Gentiles. Still farther did they forward the great work when they persecuted the disciples of Christ and compelled them to fly from Judea whereby Christ was proclaimed to all the nations of the known world.

The exertions of the wicked at the present day are made subservient to the propagation of the Gospel in a variety of ways. The attacks of infidels upon the bible have called forth the most able defenses - and indeed so completely triumphant have been these answers that an avowed infidel at the present day is rare. Indeed many of the peculiar weapons which not long since were employed to crush Christianity are now wrested from the hands of the devil and successfully used as a means of its propagation. The opposition of the ungodly to practical religion also has awakened the more vigorous exertions and the more faithful prayers and admonitions of Christians whereby vital piety has been strengthened and disseminated.

Another cause why God does not cast off the wicked is that he may use them as instruments of securing the perseverance of Christians.

There is nothing that tends so much to awaken the energies of the moral as well as intellectual powers of man as a pressure upon them. And accordingly we find that the exertions of men are generally proportional to the difficulties in their way. Were Christians left without any foes they would soon sink into stupidity and spiritual death. They have indeed many powerful enemies in their own bosoms: but they need also foes without to awaken their vigilance and lift them up to the fortifications of their heart as there is not a more just saying among the records of heathenism than that a man stands in need of very faithful friends or of bitter enemies. The opposition of the wicked to the righteous furnishes this requisite incitement and probably many a Christian is indebted to their reproach and scorn or public persecution for that holy zeal and unwavering resolution that have carried him triumphant through every difficulty in given him the victory over the world the flesh and the Devil. Had Lot lived in a Christian land he would probably have never been the eminent saint he was in Sodom. Had David not been surrounded by bitter enemies most of his life he had probably relapsed into open iniquity. Paul felt, *his spirit strive within him when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry*, and no doubt that in every age the profligacy the hatred and the persecution of the wicked have seemed sure to drive Christians nearer to God and to wean them from the world.

The last reason that we shall mention why the wicked are suffered to live is that they may fill up the measure of their iniquity.

When a person transgresses every law of God and man living in open defiance of heaven and earth and scattering misery around him we cannot help admiring why the sword of eternal justice is not commissioned to cut him asunder. But says an Apostle *what if God willing to show his wrath and to make his power endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*. We must acknowledge indeed that this forbearance is not inconsistent with the attributes of God. By using these *vessels of wrath* as instruments God might execute his vengeance upon his enemies without infringing at all upon the free agency of their instruments. For they would be only giving loose to their own abominable desires - and therefore while they were fulfilling the judgment of God they were *treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath*. And when at length the wrath of God is poured out upon them also the justice and the power of God will be more conspicuous because the measure of their iniquity is filled up. Saith God to Pharaoh, *even for this cause have I raised thee up that I might show my power in thee and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth*. The heart of this king was hardened and he was permitted to sit in defiance of God for so many years in order that the power of God might be more signally displayed in the deliverance of the Israelites and the Pharaoh's final destruction in the Red Sea might be more complete and alarming. When we see a man whose career has been short and whose conduct has been moral and amiable when we see such an one with the hand of God heavily upon him - and hurried out of the world before he has embraced Christ and therefore gone down to everlasting woe there is excited within us short sighted creatures a distressing perplexity at the darkness and unsearchableness of the judgment of God. But when a man has long resisted all the warnings and the threatenings of God and has waxed worse and worse in iniquity even to old age when such an one is smitten at last we see and feel the justice of God. And that this justice may sometimes be displayed even in this world the wicked are permitted to live to fill up measure of their iniquity.

The first inference deductible from the subject is the consistency of the sovereignty of God with the free agency of man.

The crucifixion of Christ by Jesus is a good illustration of this principle. Every man will say that this people were perfectly voluntary and free and that they were merely indulging their malice and corruption in this barbarous deed. And yet this event was ordered in the councils of heaven with unerring certainty. This says Peter to the Jews, *being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*. In this single instance we find no difficulty in reconciling the Divine determination or decree with the perfect freedom of man. And so we might produce a thousand other individual instances in which no more difficulty would occur. But when we find it essential as a general principle that God hath ordained whatsoever comes to pass we are very apt to revolt against it is a hard saying. Now do not our objections proceed from the impossibility of grasping with our feeble faculties the whole of this subject at once. When we look at particular cases which seem to involve this general principle our view is not perplexed. If thus the bible asserts the doctrine of divine sovereignty why is not the wisest course to receive the doctrine and to resolve all our difficulties in attempting feebly to comprehend it into the limited nature of our minds?

In the second place this subject shows us the folly and madness of contending against God.

The wicked may here see that they are in the hands of a sovereign God who is using them as instruments for promoting his purposes of mercy and justice and for his glory. So long as these purposes require they will be suffered to live in sin and whenever these require they will be made monuments of God's everlasting displeasure. All their efforts to prevent the spread of religion will be overwhelmed for its more speedy diffusion. More easily O sinner could you arrest yonder sun in its route through heaven, than you can check the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He will win - it will have free course - it will be glorified. The Lord who sitteth in the heavens will laugh at your opposing efforts and hold them in derision. \*

But perhaps you reply that if God's fierce be promoted by the sins of men as well as by their holiness why do you urge us so strenuously to forsake sin and why should God punish us for promoting his glory?

And do you really believe sinner that because God has the power to overrule your violations of his law so as to prevent their natural tendency and even render them soon subservient to his purposes - do you believe that this exculpates you from blame? Remember that the universe is not given up to the ravages of sin not because you have been wanting in exertions to effect such a revolution - But because and only because God has so much power and so much benevolence and so much wisdom that he is able and willing to counteract your efforts and to bring forth good out of evil. Remember too that the fact of your opposing a being so great and wise as him will only sink you lower in condemnation and make you realize the justice of everlasting misery.

From then on bow your stubborn neck to the Gospel and from an enemy of God become a coworker with Him in the great designs that of his government. Then will you not only escape the fiery indignation that now awaits you but be admitted to the everlasting love and felicities of heaven.

Delivered

At Conway January 1821

## Sermon 38 Submission to God

[Sermon No. 38, "Submission to God," James 4:6-7, Job 22:29, 1820,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 6]

James 4:6-7

*God resists the proud but giveth grace unto the humble.  
Submit yourselves therefore to God.*

James 4: 10

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up.*

Job 22: 29

*When men are cast down then shalt they say, There is lifting up:  
and he shall save the humble person.*

The opposers of revelation acknowledge that according to the religion of nature repentance is necessary to secure the favour of God. We demand of them to state the precise degree in which sorrow for sin must be exercised to meet the divine acceptance. But we demand an impossibility. They cannot put their finger upon anyone point in the scale of penitence and say, *to this degree you must descend before God will stretch out to you the scepter of mercy.*

In such a painful uncertainty about the conditions on which reconciliation with God may be affected does natural religion leave its miserable votaries. But we who profess to believe the Gospel *have a more secure word of prophecy sure word of prophecy to which we shall do well to take as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.* From that Gospel we can learn as definitely as words can trace out the feelings of the heart that the precise point at which a sinner must arrive before the light of God's countenance will be lifted upon him and before we are authorized to say unto him, *Son be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee.* This point lies far below that exaltation to which all men are raised by the natural pride of the heart and therefore to reach it they must be cast down and then but not till then can we say to them, *There is lifting up.* *[This last sentence is crossed out]*

The degree of sorrow for sin in real penitents is indeed very different in different individuals. But under the Christian dispensation repentance though essential to conversion is not as in natural religion the only condition of acceptance with God. Other feelings must also be experienced by the sinner as conditions of his pardon. And the regenerating grace of God is given to that man in whom all these feelings exist at the same time even though their intensity be as different in different persons as the vary from one another in natural complexion or disposition. Or at least this remark will apply to the feeling of penitence - and therefore in stating the Gospel terms of salvation we are not compelled to attempt so impossible a thing as to define the precise degree in which it must exist.

That state of mind to which any sinner must be brought or he will never be converted, may in general

terms be defined to be a cordial willingness to receive salvation entirely through faith in Jesus Christ. But this willingness is the result of other feelings which coexist in the mind. And these we shall now proceed to define and illustrate. In other words we mean to point out what is essential to be experienced by every man at the moment of conversion.

And let it be premised that the feelings we are about to describe are all the result of the operation of God's Spirit. So wide and universal is the alienation of the human heart from God and so opposite are its inclinations to His will that without this agent it would forever remain estranged from him. And when first the Spirit exerts his influences upon it the man is excited to resistance. The first impressions on the sinner's heart produce in him an alarm for his safety. But instead of submitting to Christ he strives in a thousand ways to rid himself of his fears. God however in great mercy will not leave him to his chosen way - but the admonitions and reproofs of the Spirit are again repeated and increased so that the sinner still refusing to submit often carries his opposition to rage and madness. At length his proud Spirit is broken and he sinks down a lost and helpless wretch before a sovereign God. And the state of his feelings at this moment is what we wish to describe.

And in the first place a man brought into such a condition realizes that his own righteousness cannot save him from eternal misery. He had formally flattered himself with the idea that his many fine moralities - his amiable disposition, his kindness to all about him and the countenance he gave to every benevolence and religious institution - would recommend him to the favour of God. He could not believe that the kind and beneficent parent of the universe whose will it is that all should be saved would permit any one to perish finally whose good deeds were so many and whose life was so regular and upright and unspotted. Besides he had believed for many years the Bible. And although he had doubted many of the doctrines which are contained in it and never knew personally what is meant by experimental religion yet he felt a confidence that in all his opinions and conduct he had been sincere and he felt assured that sincerity would be excepted rather than any particular belief.

But this man now brought to realize his true condition perceives that in all these conclusions he was deluded. In looking back upon his life he does indeed see many moral and benevolent actions which in the view of man were praiseworthy. But in not one of them does he perceive that he acted with a regard to the will of God. In other words had God not existed he would have performed the very same deeds. And therefore though they were laudable and agreeable to reason and the bible yet not one of them was a holy action. To all these actions he was prompted by animal impulses or worldly motives and for them he had had his reward - and therefore they could not extend to God. And as to his supposed sincerity in regard to the Scriptures he now perceives that it never prompted him to a diligent enquiry into their meaning. If you read them it was not with an anxious desire to discover every doctrine contained in them that he might embrace it. But rather that he might find texts to support his particular views. In short His sincerity never prompted him to read the bible with prayer - the only certain method of understanding it aright. And therefore he now realizes that his boasted sincerity was but another name for indifference or hypocrisy. Indeed he perceives that *having been ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish his own righteousness he had not submitted himself to the righteousness of God.*

But the delusions of this man are now scattered and these false confidences these self-righteous supports are torn away. The Spirit has shown him that he has leaned *on the staff of a broken reed*. And will he presume any longer to trust in his own righteousness? His righteousness! He now perceives that he never had any. But may he not now commence a new course and make the will of God his guide and the glory of God his motive - and in this way justify himself before God? Alas! How can he atone for his

past sins. And can he hope to live a sinless life in future? Besides were this possible all his services would be justly due to God and he would still *be an unprofitable servant*. Self-righteousness therefore as the ground of acceptance with God must be wholly given up. And the man of whom we speak has given it up and now begins to perceive and feel the force of the Apostles argument - *Now we know that what things govern the law saith is saith to them who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.*

But the views of this man in regard to his own character do not terminate here. For in the second place he perceives that he has been and still is sinning against the holiest the kindest and the best of Beings. When he looks back upon his life he discovers it to be little else than a continued violation of that, *law which is holy just and good*, or an omission to comply with its requirements. And this too in deference of all the light of warnings and exhortations which have poured upon him from the bible from the pulpit and the providences of God. When he sees how many motives to holiness he has resisted he is astonished at the perversity and hardness of his heart. Once he was unwilling to be told that he was depraved and that he was an enemy of God. He might acknowledge himself guilty of some sins. But at the same time he believed that there were within him some virtuous and holy inclinations, prompting him to love God and his fellow men. And he felt it to be a hard judgment to be told that he was *dead in trespasses and sins and treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath*. But how different are his feelings now that the Spirit has opened his eyes and *convinced him of sin of righteousness and of judgment to come!* Tell him now of the purity of his past life and the correctness of his motives and he will look upon you as a base flatterer. For that past life is now painted upon his memory in an impressive and painful distinctness. And among all his deeds for perhaps ten or twenty or thirty years he cannot turn his thoughts upon one which was prompted by the love of God. Nor can he discover among all his desires one that was strictly holy. And forcibly does he realize that the glory of God has not had a place among the motives that stimulated his exertions.

This picture of a past life that now rises in full and distinct view before the sinner is also aggravated when he compares it with the forbearance and kindness of God. Notwithstanding sin is the abominable thing which he hates and notwithstanding he had power to destroy both soul and body in hell yet this man has been suffered to go on month after month year after year in the habitual violation of the laws of heaven. Nay more God has watched over him and defended him from a thousand dangers and surrounded him with innumerable mercies during this so long season of forgetfulness rebellion and ingratitude. Such forbearances this was great beyond human comprehension. And wherefore was it that against a Being this infinitely benevolent and merciful this man should near the standard of rebellion and trample on the authority and spurn the protection of the omnipotent God? The perversity of the human heart can alone explain such infatuation. That perversity in all its unalleviated bitterness this convicted sinner is now made to feel. Once the language of the Bible on the subject seemed to him an exaggeration or a mystery. But he now finds by his experience that, *the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked - that it is full of evil - that the imagination a man's heart is evil from his youth - that in him that is in his flesh there dwelleth not good things - that the wicked are estranged from the womb and go astray as soon as they be born speaking lies*, and that, *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are Spiritually discerned*. In the language of Eliphaz this man will say, *Is not my wickedness great and my iniquities infinite?* He will join in the petition of Job, *I have sinned: what shall I do unto thee O thou Preserver of men?* With the publican will he exclaim, *God be merciful to me a sinner* and with David will he say, *Have mercy upon me oh God according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*



It is hardly necessary in the third place to say that such a sense as this of his sinfulness and of God's forbearance will produce in the heart of the convicted sinner the contrite feelings of genuine repentance. Before he realized the extent and Spirituality of God's law and his violations of it - before he compared his uninterrupted and ungrateful opposition to God with the forbearance and mercies of his Father in heaven it is no wonder that he should feel none of the reproaches of conscience and refuse to humble himself and to mourn over his sins. But when all these things are presented before him in their genuine aspect it would be a miracle if the view did not soften and melt his heart - if it did not sink him in the dust before God and produce him that *godly sorrow that work of repentance unto life*. If we have wantonly outraged the feelings of our nearest earthly friend - there is no one who would not deeply feel this offence when the gust of passion passed over. Had we robbed of his property or reputation or peace the man who risked his life to save ours and who had loaded us with innumerable favors how bitter would be our anguish when brought to realize our ingratitude and cruelty! What then should be the feelings of the sinner when first made sensible of his unnumbered violations of the laws and will of his friend in heaven and that his life has been little else but a series of efforts to defeat the designs that God in whom *he lives and moves and has his being* and to disorder the cause of that Redeemer who has actually laid down his life to save him from eternal ruin!

The fourth sentiment that goes to make up the exercises at the moment of conversion of the convicted sinner is that he deserves to be forsaken of God and given over to eternal misery. Had he been placed where he could have had no opportunity to know what were the will and the requirements of God he might justly complain if forever deserted. But what greater light or what more powerful motives could have been set before him to persuade him to turn from his sins and those he has experienced in a Gospel land? And yet all these he has slighted and resisted year after year. And now where would be the injustice if God should leave him to his chosen way? Under what obligations is he placed to strive with man forever? Besides all this tell me if you can the precise evil and demerit of a single sin against such a being as God. In order to this you must be able to look through all the possible relations of Spiritual existence and your standard of measurement must be infinity. What then will be the demerit of a ten or twenty or thirty years series of transgressions?

This reasoning the convicted sinner feels in its full force and is thereby brought to the painful conclusion that the justice of God would remain untarnished were he to be cast off forever to suffer the interminable effects of his sins in the world of hopeless despair. If therefore God do save him it must be thorough sovereign unmerited mercy.

There remains but one of the prominent feeling to be mentioned that exists in the heart of the convicted penitent we are describing and that is a lively sense of the fitness and propriety of the Gospel plan of salvation through and to the crucified Redeemer. Having given up every hope in his own righteousness is a ground of acceptance and pardon and being weighed down with the intolerable load of his sins and perceiving that he might in justice be left to perish beneath them, he despairs of being able by his own exertions to restore himself to the favor of God. And therefore he casts his eyes about him with an anxious solicitude to see if he cannot obtain assistance from abroad. A voice reaches him from heaven, *come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest*. It is the voice of God, *who is mighty to save - of Him who hath trodden the wine press alone - who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities*. Here then is precisely that assistance this man wants. His own righteousness cannot save him: but here *may he be justified purely by grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus*. His sins are innumerable and he cannot atone for the least of them but here is one who *have borne our sins in his own body on the tree and in whom there is plenteous*

*redemption*. He cannot overcome the perversity and corruption of his heart and turn it to love God and to practice holiness. Yet this almighty Saviour is ready to send down to him the Comforter and to save him by, *the washings of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*. In this Redeemer then all fullness dwells. And the despairing sinner perceives that his atonement and righteousness are his only refuge from the wrath of an offended God and that he is alone fountain whence can be drawn the waters of eternal life.

We have now gone through with the delineation of those feelings that coexist in the heart of the sinner when he is brought to see his real condition and to be guilty and condemned before God. We have shown you that that he then realizes the total insufficiency of his own righteousness - and the sinfulness of his life and the stubborn fraternity and corruption of his heart and that there exist within him genuine repentance and a consciousness of deserving everlasting misery - and a sense of the fullness and sufficiency there is in Christ. And now to the man who is brought to this state of mind - to one who is thus cast down from the pinnacle of self-righteousness and pride and his wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked before a sovereign God to such an one we are authorized in the name of the Lord Jesus to say, *There is lifting up*.

You are brought as we believe to that state of mind in which it is consistent with the Divine attributes to bestow on you regenerating grace (or rather you are already converted: for such graciously supply a new heart) you will be lifted up to the enjoyment of God's favor peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost - to the exalted privilege of a Son of God - and an heir of heaven.

And to this point of submission to the possession of these feelings my hearers do we believe every man must be brought or he will never be converted. The manner in which this state of feeling is produced - the means of arriving at it and the distinctiveness with which it is experienced are seldom precisely the same in two individuals. One person is suddenly seduced to it and has an intense perception of it - another submits slowly and cannot determine the time when such a state of feeling was first experienced. Yet amid all this variety we maintain that this point is reached and must be reached by every man in order to his becoming a Christian. If we build on any other foundation we cannot expect permanent peace of mind. But we shall be carried about by every wind of doctrine and in every season of trial we shall find our basis of sand failing us. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ*. Now that state of mind we have been describing is one in which Christ is all in all - and indeed we may define it to be a disposition to receive him cordially and unreservedly in his character of Prophet Priest and King.

But there is such a thing as coming very near the state of mind and yet never reaching it. The man is willing to submit in part but refuses to yield unreservedly to the will of God and to his method of salvation. He still clings to him some remnant of self-righteousness - some secret defendance on his own goodness - he does not feel that he is entirely lost or dependant on the grace of God. And hence it is that so many who profess to be Christians manifest so little zeal in the cause of Christ. Hence it is that they have no clear evidence of their interest in Christ. We have built on a false foundation and unless we tear this away and rest solely on that chief corner stone laid in Zion elect and precious we may be assured that the edifice we have erected is *of wood or hay or stubble* or that it will not abide that fiery trial which is to try every man's worth.

But that state of mind we have attempted to describe in this discourse is not confined to the period of conversion. It may then indeed be most manifest, but it remains in the true Christian through life. Whenever he presents himself before God he realizes the insufficiency of his own righteousness - and

that his sins are multiplied and aggravated. And for there does he exercise repentance and acknowledge that God might justly leave him forever and not only does he perceive the necessity of Christ's atonement but he exercises faith in his blood. And it is the permanence of these feelings that affords decisive evidence of a Christian state. And to the man who is thus habitually cast down we can triumphantly say, *There is lifting up*. Perhaps for ten or twenty or thirty or forty years you can remember that such has been your state. Thus do we say unto you that you are already lifted up to an enviable height. And whatever be your infirmities and bodily pains soon will they be over and you will be lifted up to that world where sickness and sorrow and death will no more interrupt the enjoyment of your God.

Delivered

At Deerfield (Wapping) 1820

At Conway January 1821

At Ashfield January 1821

At Waterbury March 1821

At Amherst West Parish March 1835

## Sermon 39 Christ the Searcher of Hearts

[Sermon No. 39, "Christ the Searcher of Hearts," Revelation 2:23, 1821 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 6]

Revelations 2.23

*And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.*

How few of the Christian church have any lively sense of the presence of the Lord Jesus when they assemble to commemorate his love and his death! And still fewer are there who forcibly feel that he is there looking into their hearts and registering the state of them in the book of his remembrance. Yet it is nevertheless there that our Savior is really present with us on every sacramental occasion as he was with the twelve disciples when this supper was first instituted. And he knows each one of us and the state of our hearts and our motives and our fitness or unfitness for participating on the holy supper as well as he knew these things is regard to the Apostles. This omniscient eye is indeed upon us at all times: but on such an occasion so solemn so tender so holy and so animating the Redeemer may justly expect in his preferred followers that preparation of heart which will not shrink from inspection. He expects to find on them the wedding garment and that they are waiting to welcome the Bridegroom. And therefore his destiny into their thoughts and feelings at such a season will be unusually exact and penetrating. Not an unholy desire can then lurk in the very darkness corner of the soul – not a worldly thought can enter nor any unworthy motive be wrapped in the thickest foldings of the heart which his all searching vigilance will not discover.

And this omniscient survey is going on unperceived by those who are the subjects of it. While their utmost exertions are directed to hide the state of their hearts (if it be unusually bad) from their brethren and to retain the favorable opinion of the world they are extremely apt to forget that he who searches the the reins and the hearts is then turning upon them an eye before whose glance the marks of hypocrisy becomes transparent the windings of the human heart are made straight. They go away rejoicing that they have deceived man; not remembering that a faithful unseen witness has *written their sin with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond*.

It may be profitable to us Christian brethren if we follow in imagination the Lord Jesus as he enters the hearts of his preferred professed disciples this day assembled around the communion board. For it is not impossible we may in some heart discover a resemblance to our own and thereby be enabled to determine what estimate of ourselves will this morning be carried to heaven and sealed up to the judgment day.

The man whom we first approach is one in whose countenance and demeanor there is much seriousness – even an excess of humility and severance. But when we pass this extension we find the picture the reverse. In one word we find we have entered the heart of a hypocrite - of a man who professes religion because he hopes thereby to accomplish some worldly selfish end: but does not believe in its reality and despises its doctrines and its institutions. As he now sits at the Lord's table instead of examining himself and praying for an increase of faith and love he is reflecting with proud contempt upon the weakness and superstition of those around him whom he supposes to be sincere in

the belief of such absurdities – and triumphing in his own superior discernment and wisdom by which he is able to rise above these superstitions and to turn them to his own aggrandizement.

My hearers did you ever look at a darker or more frightful spot than this man's heart. It is indeed a *whited sepulcher full of dead men's bones and all manner of corruption*. And do not hear the piercing reproof which Christ directs to this man – *Judas betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss*.

We hope however that there are few such hearts in the Christian church. It is to be feared however that the next example to which your attention is has many patterns in the visible church. We refer to the man who while he partakes of the body and blood of Christ does not believe in the doctrine of his atonement. He may acknowledge indeed that Christ has redeemed us from superstition and ignorance and that he has sent us an eminent pattern in his life for imitation. But that he has *redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us* - that he died for our sins according to the Scriptures and was delivered for our offences: that this man after he had *made one sacrifice for sins sat down on the right hand of God*: in short that the righteousness of Christ is the sole ground on which any man can be pardoned and admitted to heaven - such doctrine as this the man whose heart we are now exhibiting before you rejects as not reasonable nor credible. Why then is he partaking of the Lord's Supper? He will reply that it is to commemorate the death of Christ as the greatest of benefactors that ever appeared on earth. But he acknowledges that the benefits derived from him consist wholly in enlightening our minds - and therefore they differ from the discoveries made by other men such as Socrates and Plato in nothing but in the degree. Hence the feelings of this professor of religion at the Lord's table are precisely of the same kind as they would be if he were commemorating the death of Socrates or Plato - and such commemoration would be equally proper. Is this the doctrine of the bible? Answer ye humble souls who have never learned to speculate upon religious truth but who have received your instructions from the bible and the Holy Spirit and who have for years looked with a steadfast faith on the righteousness of Christ as your only refuge from the vengeance of an offended God.

And do you imagine my hearers that, *he who searches the reins and hearts does not feel wounded in the house of his friends*, when he reads the feelings of another description of his professed disciples concerning his exalted character? Who refuse *to honor him as they honor the Father* - who do not believe that, *he is over all God blessed forever*, and who withhold from him that worship which the angels of God bestow? And who reduce him from the Creator to the creature? Do such persons indeed realize while they approach the table of their Lord that it is *he who searcheth the reins and the hearts*? Let them then enquire whose prerogative is this and Solomon in his address to the supreme God will answer – *Thou even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men*. If then Christ be really God will he regard with complacency the man whose views of him are infinitely below the truth? Will he manifest himself unto *such an one as he does not unto the world*? Let experience answer.

But another heart is opened before us - and there is stamped upon it in painful distinctiveness - self righteousness. We care not if this man affirms his belief in the righteousness of Christ as the sole ground of his acceptance: for we know that he depends upon his own. When he looks back upon his many good deeds and his amiable conduct - when he remembers that such a sum of money he has given to one benevolent object and such a sum to another the view flatters him and occupies more of his thoughts than his sins of omission and commission during the same period. Hence the language of his heart will be *Lord I thank thee that I am not as other men are*. Whereas he ought to say and feel, *I am an unprofitable servant God be merciful to me a sinner*.

And will this man come in an acceptable manner to the table of communion? Will Christ there appear to

him all in all? O this self righteous Spirit will exclude him from the fellowship of God and his Son Jesus Christ as certainly and as entirely as did the leprosy banish one from the Jewish camp. He is indeed the leprosy of the soul and if not cleansed in that *fountain set open for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in from sin to uncleanness* it will poison the whole moral system.

Concerning the next heart which we would describe as being sometimes perhaps not infrequently found at the communion table what my brethren shall we say shall we call it a Christian heart or not? For belongs to one who neglects almost wholly secret and family prayer. Day after day and week after week passes over his head during which rarely a single humble fervent effectual prayer is offered up by him to his Father in heaven. And does he then love this God while he is so so unwilling to come into his presence to seek those mercies he needs? Does he highly value the prevalent name of his Redeemer and yet so seldom use it? The supposition is contrary to every analogy on earth. For whether houses or land or wife or children be ardently loved their presence and society is universally sought - after and coveted. A Christian without prayer! As easily might the vapours float without air or the rainbow exist without rain or man without breath. And that a prayerless man should celebrate the Lord's supper as a disciple what is it but solemn mockery. And how will those answer it to thy conscience? And how will thou answer it to thy God?

The next Christian communicant whose heart is not right in the sight of God is he whose conduct and feeling are in general criminally conformed to the world. The practice is in contradiction to the words of John, *know he not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God*. For on every day of the week except the seventh he is ready to join in all the vain amusements - and less criminal pleasures of the world and in all if less violent opposition to religion. In other words during the week his select and chosen society are the enemies of religion - and on the Sabbath and sacramental communion he claims a brotherhood to the saints - and thus does he think to purchase a license for returning again to his week day companions. But certain it is that this tithe of mint anise and cumin though it may procure for him a release from the reproof of conscience in this world yet it will never purchase heaven. For an Apostle hath said, *Be ye not conformed to the world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*.

The next character we would hold up to view does not differ materially from the last. For the former is conformed to the world and this one devoted to its acquisition. The riches of that world are his idol before which he bows daily and his worship and sincere voluntary and delightful. Compare this with worship of God. And where think you does he receive most pleasure when looking over his possessions and praying in his closet? And which would he soonest neglect his gold or his devotions? Where does he appear most active and interested in maturing and accomplishing plans for the increase of his property or in working out his salvation or in striving to advance the Redeemer's kingdom in the world? The answer to these enquiries is given on the face of this man's conduct - so plainly indeed that he himself will scarcely deny that his greatest pleasure arises from the acquisition of worldly possessions. And yet with this fact before him and with the alarming declaration of Christ sounding in his ears, *ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, he has presented himself this morning as a follower of Jesus - as one who has entered into a solemn covenant to consecrate his time and talents to his body and spirit to the service of his Redeemer to partake of his body and blood and thus sanction this covenant anew. And is it a harsh judgment to say that even in the midst of this solemn transaction when the symbols of his bleeding dying Saviour are so forcibly presented to him his thoughts are more occupied by worldly cares and dreams of wealth and by the glories and graces of his Redeemer's character or by the sinfulness and stupidity of his own heart? And is it a hard judgment to say that such a man eats and drinks unworthily and therefore eats and drinks damnation to himself?

The heart of the next man we approach directs us to his life as an index to that account which the searcher of reins and hearts will this day seal up against him. This is the professor whose intemperance in drinking is already known to the world notwithstanding all his efforts to conceal it. And why will he still continue to crucify his Redeemer afresh? May not rather now resolve to exercise repentance and be resolute in reformation!

Or with equal propriety might we point to the person who for weeks and months is employed notwithstanding the vows of the Lord are upon him in spreading the false report and stirring up discord between neighbor and neighbor - but who notwithstanding has this day come forth to commemorate the death of him *who when he was reviled reviled not again*. And is there not too much reason to fear that were we to hold up pictures of many other descriptions of evil doers we might find the originals in some part of the visible church? *My brethren these things ought not to be.*

Another heart which the omniscient eye of Christ regards with disapprobation belongs to one who is now about to come to his Redeemer table although he has made no peculiar preparation for it. No uncommon earnestness is in prayer - no additional strictness in self-examination has he practiced during the weeks or the morning past: but he comes now to this solemn institution with as much stupidity of heart as he usually brings into the ordinary services of the Sabbath. When we are invited to feast with our neighbors we are careful that our exterior at least shall be becoming and that we may not by our neglect of cleanliness and civility wound the feelings of the master of the feast. But when the Lord of glory - the Creator of heaven and earth condescends to invite us to his table we can with shameful indifference go up to his feast and enter into his holy and pure presence with the ragged and filthy garments of sin upon us.

There is another heart which we fear maybe found this morning at the Table are our Redeemer which is there in vain and worse than in vain. And to discover its deficiency we must look not alone at its state in relation to God but also in relation to man. This person hates his brother and a separation takes place between them in most of the intercourse of life: and they strive to injure one another's reputation and Christian character. Yet these men are both come professedly as Christian brethren cherishing towards each other a lively sympathy for the their mutual welfare and are about to partake of the Lord's body and blood of him whose garment was without seam from top to bottom and whose commandment it is that his followers love one another and who by the mouth of his Apostle said, *if a man say I love God and hateth his brother he is a liar.*

But let us turn from this painful exhibition of unworthy communicants and look at those (and we fondly and charitably believe these to constitute the great majority of the Christian church) whom Christ recognizes this day as his genuine disciples and who have on the wedding garment. We point you first to him whose heart is contrite and humble and penitent who has a lively sense of his own poverty sinfulness and need of the robe of Christ's righteousness and who sits at his table hungering and thirsting after the bread of eternal life. And to such an one do we firmly believe this will be given. For here is that preparation a heart necessary for its reception. There is that humble contrite spirit with which God declares he will dwell.

We point you in the second place to that man who approaches the Saviour's feast with a joyful heart. It is not the joy of the world which will soon be turned into mourning but it is joy in the Holy Ghost, a joy resulting from a long course of watching and praying. It results from a sense of pardoned sin - of acceptance in a Mediator - of a restoration of the favour and love of God and a firm hope of heaven.

This man then when partaking of the symbols of Christ's atonement will have awakened within him a lively gratitude to that Redeemer who, *was wounded for his transgressions and bruised his iniquities who was borne his sins in his own body in the tree and who hath sent down his Comforter to lead him into all truth and to give him the peace of God which passeth understanding.*

And in the third place are we not authorized to exhibit a heart in which dwells the faith of assurance? Does not the eye of your Redeemer ye aged fathers in the church as it penetrates your souls does it not there read your feelings in the language of Paul? *I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will give me on that day.* Then does the Lord pronounce you indeed worthy a place at his table – and to you will he whisper the language of promise and consolation – *I go to prepare a place for you that where I am ye may be also*, and that ye may drink wine and eat bread at my table in my Father's kingdom.

My Christian brethren let us apply this subject to ourselves. Let us enquire whether any of the characters we have held up before you belong to us. And if such be the case there are about two consistent courses - either to refuse a reception of the sacred elements before us or to exercise immediate repentance. The latter is the proper course. And may we each one of us be enabled also forcibly to realize that the eye of Him who searcheth the reins and hearts is now turned upon us. In the midst of us he stands this day to learn who are his followers and who are his foes - who are alive in his cause and who have forsaken their first love. Yes and the recording angel stands beside Him with his pen of iron and his opened roll to mark down our names and our love or our hatred - our zeal or our coldness - our feelings and our motives. That roll will this day be sealed up and stamped with the signet of God. And that record whether it be to our condemnation or our acquittal will never be opened till that final day when this same witness shall break the seal thereof and hold it up unaltered to the view of an assembled universe.

Delivered

At Conway March 1821

At Deerfield May 1821



## Sermon 40 Godly Sincerity

[Sermon No. 40, "Godly Sincerity," John 1:47, 1821 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 6]

John 1:47

*Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.*

Amid the many conflicting opinions that exist among the professed followers of Christ, while one learned man says this is the meaning of the bible and another puts upon it a totally different construction the humble enquirer after the truth who has not that stretch of intellect nor that store of knowledge necessary to discover the error or correctness of these clashing sentiments is apt to be perplexed and bewildered. And such an one will anxiously look about him for some clew that will lead him securely through this labyrinth of controversy. Is there no course that I can pursue will he say which is secure and which will unerringly lead me to the belief of such doctrines as will secure my acceptance with God? Show me that path and I will pursue it in defiance of every obstacle:. But if there be none then must I give up every hope of arriving at the truth and must regard religion as a mass of contradictions.

To the man who presents this supplication we are prepared to say that this is one thing whose possession is to human probability a security against fatal error and which like the hand of Moses stretched over the Red Sea will divide the waters of contention so that a man may pass through on dry land. And this thing is genuine sincerity and examining the bible and in performing those duties which God requires.

Many do indeed most strenuously object against the principle that sincerity will infallibly guide a man into a correct speculative faith in matters of religion and that it is all that God requires of us. For say they many of the Mahommedans and Pagans are unquestionably most sincere in the belief of their absurdities as the practice of their enormities and therefore if your doctrine be true it is no matter what a man believes or does. We do not indeed mean to extend this idea of sincerity to Pagans or Mahommedans. We leave them in the hands of a merciful and righteous God - and speak in this place only of the sincerity of those who live under the light of the Gospel. And of such we affirm that if they improve to the utmost of their power the facilities and means in their hands they have the promise of God that they shall be guided into all necessary truth. The purposes of God may indeed require after all that such a person should be left to go astray: but we speak here of the revealed will of God and according to this, *everyone that asketh receiveth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened*. What can be plainer than this unlimited promise that if any man seeks in the proper way (and what is the proper way if it be not in sincerity! ) for a right understanding of God's will and his duty he will have all necessary light given him and not seek in vain? There is however such a thing as a false and delusive sincerity which is no other than hypocrisy in disguise. Nay so well does it counterfeit genuine sincerity that the man in whose heart it exists is often deceived and that fatally. And we presume that it is this misnamed sincerity which leads many Christians to contend against the principle we lay down that genuine sincerity is sure of acceptance with God. In other words they deny this principle because they do not make a distinction between spurious and real sincerity.

It is an inquiry of peculiar interest therefore to every seeker after truth what are the marks of true genuine sincerity? And we shall appropriate this discourse to pointing out and illustrating those discriminating marks by which this virtue may be known.

And you have my hearers a distinguished example of this virtue in the Nathaniel who in the text is said to be *an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile*. This was the character given of him by him who *knew what was in man*. Nathaniel did indeed indulge an unreasonable prejudice against the place of Christ's birth: but it was the prejudice of an honest mind - a prejudice that yielded in a moment as soon as the evidence of this Messiahship was presented before him. There with the like frankness he explained, *Rabbi thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel*.

But the conduct of Nathaniel is presented to us in this place only in a single instance - and there is scarcely a man in any congregation who will not suppose that his own conduct in the like circumstances would be marked by the same candor and submission to truth. In order therefore to determine what would be the course a man of Nathaniel's character that is a man of genuine sincerity would pursue were the bible just put into his hands as a revelation from God - we must go into a more particular analysis of his character.

We will of suppose for the sake of brevity that this man is convinced from a rigid examination of the evidence that all scripture both in Old and New Testaments, is *given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine for reproof for correction for instruction in righteousness*. The next enquiry therefore will be what do the Scriptures reveal to be believed and what to be practical. To determine this question genuine sincerity will lead him in the first place to give up all confidence in the expositions and commentaries of the Bible by men of every name and nation.

When this man looks over the countless volumes that have been written in illustration of the scriptures he does indeed find an agreement in relation to certain facts and many circumstances of comparatively small importance are exhibited in a clearer point of view. But the grand and essential doctrines of the Gospel - the supporting columns of the Christian edifice and not merely the *pins of the tabernacle* are what this man is now inquiring after. And concerning these he finds almost as many discordant opinions as he reads commentators. He perceives that each one of them endeavors to give every passage in the Bible meaning conformable to a preconceived and preestablished system. His prejudices are indeed in favor of some one of the systems and all others appeared to him absurd. Yet in forming his opinions he had never thoroughly and prayerfully consulted his bible: nor is he even acquainted with the opposing commentaries. He resolves now therefore to give up his prejudice and to give up with them all human exposition of Scripture. Should he resolve to wade through all these commentaries he would find truth encumbered with so much learned lumber that it would require more discernment and judgment to discover and to decide which was correct among so many clashing opinions that to form his conclusion from the unadulterated unexplained language of the Scriptures that was dictated by the Holy Spirit. It is the part of wisdom therefore and especially the part of sincerity to rid himself for the present of all the scriptural glosses and explanations of men and to sit down to a sober and impartial reading of the bible without note or comment.

Another mark of genuine sincerity is obtained when a man gives up all confidence in his own unaided powers of discernment in examining the bible.

*[The following paragraph from a small piece of paper attached to page 7 of the document is marked with an asterisk to be inserted at this location.]*

We do not intend by these remarks to represent commentaries on the Bible as useless to every description of men. For they certainly do afford a valuable assistance in extensively and minutely examining the Scriptures. But we here speak of a man who is searching for the grand essential doctrines of the Gospel. And these we maintain are so clearly revealed that a man in reading the Scriptures with the feelings and Spirit of genuine sincerity can hardly fail of understanding them and until he be established in these commentaries rather bewilder than enlighten.

Even concerning the most ordinary subjects in common life he finds that he is extremely liable to form wrong conclusions and that too where he is most sincerely desirous of discovering the truth. And in the enquiries of human literature and science that are more difficult he finds it scarcely possible to avoid being led into error. When for instance he enquires into the powers and faculties and affections of his own mind how widely astray will the least defect in a definition or the least cloudiness of conception lead him! When therefore he approaches revealed religion - a subject so vast and so widely removed from his previous enquiries and a subject too that stirs up all his most deeply rooted prejudices because it aims a deadly blow against his pride and corrupt inclinations - shall he not tremble when he comes to the examination of such a subject under so many disadvantages lest he should not be able correctly to understand it? Nay will he not have every reason to suppose that if he rely on his unaided faculties he is almost certain of being led into error - and that too where an error must be everlastingly fatal? The man who is *spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit and is propped up with science falsely so called* will feel that he is sufficient in himself for this examination. But to such an one may the words of the Prophet be addressed – *thy wisdom and thy knowledge it hath prevented them and now hast art said in thi8ne heart I am and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee, thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee thou shalt not be able to put it off and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly which thou shalt not know.*

The man of genuine sincerity however has not the hardihood to believe that he is safe in following the suggestions of his unassisted reason in looking into the vast and remote subjects revealed in the Bible. He does indeed believe that this Gospel is so plain that *the wayfaring man need not err therein*. But yet the history of the church shows him that thousands have erred - that is to say thousands have adopted sentiments directly opposite concerning the fundamental principles of the Gospel - and therefore the one or the other of these parties have *believed a lie*. Nor has this diversity been confined to the weak and ignorant but has been most marked and extensive among the great and the learned. And shall this man consider his own judgment and discernment and candor superior to that of all who have gone before him? If the spirit of genuine sincerity be within him rather will he feel that his *own strength is weakness and that he is poor and blind and naked*. Rather will he despair of ever being able to work his way through all the difficulties before him unless he can obtain assistance from abroad.

And when this man looked into the bible he finds that there is promised the Comforter the Spirit of truth who will guide men into all truth and teach them all things - and that this Spirit is given to those who ask him. He finds also that *if any man lack wisdom he may ask it of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him*. Here then is precisely that assistance this man needs and it is the third mark of his sincerity, *to place his entire dependance for understanding the doctrines of the Bible upon the teachings of the Holy Spirit*. He does not indeed expect that he shall experience any supernatural irresistible impression to guide him: but he trusts that there will be *a still small voice* whispering to his soul – *this is the way – walk thou in it*. So plainly is there an enlightening as well as

converting influence of the Spirit described in the Scriptures and so absolute is his need of such an influence that he can have no hesitancy in placing an unreserved dependance upon the promise of God that it will be given him.

But the doctrine of God should enlighten the human mind by a direct influence is also plain from reason alone. For if man's unaided faculties be indeed insufficient to direct his enquiries in spiritual subjects and if God be a just and merciful being he cannot withhold all needed light and direction to the sincere enquirer after truth. This man therefore in whom there is genuine sincerity will in his religious enquiries abandon every blind guide - every uncertain and imperfect source of light and look at once to the eternal unpolluted and overflowing fountain of truth even to his Father in heaven and realize that *the way of man is not in himself and that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*

Under such a state of feeling as this what will be the next step this man of sincerity will take? Most surely *he will read the scriptures with prayer.* And this is a fourth and most important mark of his sincerity. Having given up all confidence in the opinions of fallible men and his own unaided discernment and being thoroughly convinced that if he ever do obtain a right understanding of the truth of the Bible it must be through the teachings of the Spirit of God there is but this only way that is by prayer in which he can hope to be guided from on high. And therefore most sincerely will he offer up the supplication of the Psalmist, *Open those mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!*

There is however such a thing as offering up this petition while the man is not *praying in the Holy Ghost.* These words may be repeated before God while the heart does not enter into their Spirit - nor feel the pressing need of an answer. There may still be clinging to the man some lurking sense of his own sufficiency: or perhaps he is willing to be assisted in understanding the bible provided he can have the credit of a part of the work himself. Prayers offered up with such feelings are a mere waste of breath and will rather provoke the Almighty to send down *strong delusions* than incline him to give light and direction. But the truly sincere man offers up no such mere lip service. It is the humble and earnest supplication of one who deeply realizes his need of Divine assistance and this prayer is not made merely once or twice: but it is presented before God when this man is reading the first chapter of Genesis - and when he is reading the second - and the third - and so on till he has reached the last of Revelations.

This man of sincerity is now reading the Scriptures in the proper and the only proper way. And he reads as for his life. For he is now searching for those truths on which are suspended his everlasting destiny. But he will not proceed far in this sincere diligent and prayerful examination before he will meet with many passages of the scripture that appear to him foolishness - that strike a deadly blow at his prejudices - and that rouse up his whole heart in opposition. Here then is the spot for discovering the last of the decided marks of his sincerity if it be genuine. *It will lead him in defiance of all the opposition he feels within him to the reception and believe of every fact which he finds clearly revealed in the Bible.* That bible he believes to be the words of that God who cannot lie and he also hopes that in answer to his prayers the same Spirit who dictated it is now guiding him into the right understanding of it. He is bound therefore to believe every fact clearly contained in it, however opposed to his corrupt heart - however mysterious and however mortifying. If he rejects any part of it he forfeits at once all claim to sincerity and proves himself to be guided not by the Spirit of God but by the spirit of a rebellious heart.

These my hearers are the five discriminating and we think we may add infallible marks by which genuine sincerity in religious enquiries is distinguished from false. Under the influence of this virtue in its priority we maintain that a man will give up all confidence in the scriptural expositions of man and his own powers of discernment and realize that the Holy Spirit can alone direct him aright and that he will

habitually read the scriptures with prayer for his influences and receive as eternal truth every fact therein clearly revealed. And now in the conclusion let the enquiry come home individually to our hearts have we faithfully followed this course in forming our religious opinions? If the answer be that we have not then have we probably taken our religious system at second hand from fallible men or we have formed it by our own unaided erring and conceited faculties. And if that system be correct we are indebted not to our sincerity but a chance or the sovereign mercy of God. Our sincerity! If we have not followed this plain and simple course it is ostentation it is mockery to pretend to it. It is a sincerity which will not abide the scrutinizing eye of Omniscience and in the day of judgment its genuine character will be unfolded and it will then be found registered in the book of God under the name of self-conceit or hypocrisy.

Two inferences will close this discourse. And first genuine or godly sincerity is the gift of God.

My hearers, this virtue as we have described it approaches too near a religious feeling to be the natural product of a spot so barren of holiness as the human heart. So rooted in pride around every fibre of it - so dark and settled is its malignity and its hostility to heaven that we believe it would never give up all confidence in itself and humbly implore divine assistance unless there was exerted upon it an influence from heaven. Like regeneration true sincerity *comes not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor the will of man but of God.*

In the second place we perceive how little of the professed sincerity of the world is genuine.

Many will talk much of their sincerity who have not only not read the bible with prayer but who had formed their religious system without consulting this volume at all unless it were afterwards to discover texts for the support of their preconceived opinions. Ask them if they suppose their unaided reason to be sufficient to guide them in the examination of the Scriptures. They will reply that this is precisely the purpose for which reason was given us. Ask them if they do not feel any need of the enlightening influences of the Spirit and their answers will show that they do not believe in His existence. Ask them if they read the bible with prayer and they will be silent. Yet these men really suppose themselves to be sincere in their religious enquiries and depend upon this more than atonement of Christ for salvation. But certain it is that true sincerity will lead a man to seize upon any means in his power for attaining to a correct system of religious beliefs. The bible was in their power as through the mercy of God the influences of his Spirit were offered them and yet they have made no proper use of these only means by which correct views of religion truth are to be obtained. Their professed sincerity therefore is a mere delusion of sin and Satan to lull asleep their conscience. And when the flames of the last day shall lay bare their bosoms they will for the first time perceive that they carry within them unhumiliated unconverted hypocritical hearts.

Delivered

At Conway March 1821

## Sermon 42 The Final Judgment a Test of Our Conduct

[Sermon No. 42, "The Final Judgment a Test of Our Conduct," II Peter 3:11-12, 1821 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 6]

II Peter 3:11–12

*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.*

We are persuaded my hearers that if you do not this day have an impressive and alarming view of the final judgment fastened upon your imagination and hearts it will not be because we have not called your attention to the picture. We may fail in making it striking and abiding but we shall not fail in the frequency of our attempts. Did the call that was made in the morning to bring your opinions to the standard of that tribunal revolt any of our feelings? Then probably they will be still more revolted at this time. For we now call upon you to bring to the test of the same fiery ordeal your practice. Once more would we lift the veil that hangs between time and eternity and bid you look at that scene which will soon - how soon we know not - burst upon our astonished senses when we shall break from the prison house of the tomb and mounting amid the burnings and the thunderings of the dissolving universe shall find ourselves conducted before the everlasting throne of justice and hear the voice of Omniscience calling us to account for the deeds done in the body. O guilty man! do you not see that eye now turning full upon you which has witnessed every thought and every desire of your head and every action of your life? And do you not see that book of judgment opening wherein are registered with the pen of iron every sin you have committed small or great jubilant public or private? If you have indeed any impressive sense of all this you will not be unwilling now to take a review of your conduct with an eye fixed on this day of the final communication of all things.

And first let those of us who are of professors of religion reexamine our hearts.

Many of us it is to be feared are left to crucify the Lord afresh and wound him in the house of his friends. When first we named the name of Christ before man we came with all our faculties of body and soul and made a solemn free will offering to them to his service for time and for eternity. Then did we promise that the cause of Christ should be the first and the controlling object of life and that every other pursuit should be regulated by and be subordinate to this. So that *whether we should eat or drink or whatsoever we should do we would do all to the glory of God*. And now when this Redeemer is before us in all the glories of an universal judge do we feel that we have kept this covenant unbroken? Can we now meet his omniscient eye and not feel guilty? Oh, that look recalls to mind the little interest we have taken in his cause. Though we have lived in a world lying in wickedness – *though the God of the world the prince of the power of the air* has been increasingly active on our right hand and on our left in building upon his kingdom and though many of our friends and acquaintances perhaps even our own families have given evidence that they were his subjects and were hastening to everlasting burnings - yet many of us have witnessed all this with apparent unconcern - and have not as good soldiers of Jesus Christ neared the standard of allegiance among the rebellious. Nay so conformed have we been to this world's practices that even our nearest neighbors would never know that we were enlisted on the Lord's side did they not see us at intervals come around his table. Yes the greatest external distinction between us and the

world has been the drinking of a little wine and the eating of a little bread! *O tell it not in Gath - publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon lest the uncircumcised triumph.*

And is this statement an exaggeration? Answer this question professor of religion with one eye fixed upon your covenant and the other fixed upon your Redeemer whom you now see face to face. Oh though art guilty my soul - guilty of breaking they vows - guilty of the blood of souls - guilty of the crucifixion of Christ.

And O backsliding Christian what if the chamber where you offer up your secret devotions were to be viewed by light of the judgment day? Oh what if after you had seen that day communing you were permitted once more to enter that chamber and make your last prayer! Would this resemble those prayers which you now daily (if indeed it be not rather weekly) put up in that place? Do you believe that you should not wrestle more earnestly then you none do for your own soul and the souls of others? Give your eye upon those miserable beings once your neighbors who are now on the left hand of judgment and whom your prayers had they been fervent and effectual might have saved from eternal woe - with your eye fixed on the distorted and agonizing countenances of these persons give an answer to this enquiry and let that answer dwell upon your mind when you this day enter that chamber of devotion.

We address next the man who neglects the instruction of those in religion whom Providence has committed to his care and guardianship. We mean the man who is the head of the family and also neglects to *bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. Though commanded to talk of these things of religion to his children *when he lies down and when he rises up and teach them diligently* yet he neglects it - and if his family were to depend upon his lips alone for religious information they would never know that there is a God and a Saviour - a soul to share to save or lose - a hell to shun and a heaven to win. With this man we are by no means going to attempt a labored argument to persuade him to adopt a different course. We merely ask him to enquire whether the reasons that now prevent him from following the scriptural direction on the subject will not fail him and appear groundless should the scene we have so often described this day prove real. Should his God and judge demand of him these reasons is he satisfied they are such as he shall then dare to give - and such as will convince the Almighty and all wise God that he has given laws to his creatures that are unreasonable?

Many men who neglect prayer when addressed on the subject give us their reasons for the omission. We will suppose such an one in the day of judgment to be enquired of by his judge in the presence of the universe why he had omitted to pray unto him in his family? Perhaps the first answer would be that he did not suppose himself a Christian - and that the prayers *of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord*. Will that Judge think ye accept this apology and acknowledge himself culpable for not giving his grace to convert this man? Or perhaps he will reply that he had not confidence to pray for the presence of his household. But my hearers do you suppose that in the day of judgment he would hesitate to pray before an assembled universe if it could save him from going away into everlasting punishment?

We call next upon the person who never prays - we mean never to any purpose never in the Holy Ghost. Who lies down at night without commending himself to the care and wakes in the morning without acknowledging the protection of God - and who never felt the need of imploring the forgiveness of his maker and Redeemer. We call upon such an one look steadily at the terrors of the last day when not all the universe can prevent his being arraigned at the bar of God and say O prayerless man do you not feel as if at such a season you should call upon your God for mercy? O you may read in the Scriptures the answer that will be given to your supplication - *when ye spread forth your hands I will hide my eyes from*

*you - yea when ye make many prayers I will not hear - ye have set at naught all my counsel and would none of my reproof - therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices.*

There are a few in persons in almost every place and (we should rejoice if there were many more of the like sincerity) who have become convinced that it is their duty to make a public profession of their faith in the Gospel, but who delay the duty month after month and year after year through a fear that their hearts are not in a proper state and that they shall *eat and drink damnation to themselves*. We would by no means address to such the language of severity. For this hesitancy and fearfulness evinces that sincerity which we believe does not go unrewarded and it is a more favorable mark in a new convert than a great degree of assurance. And besides we believe that every man who takes the vows of the Lord upon him should have a prevailing evidence that he is a Christian: *For unto the wicked God saith what hast thou to do to declare my statutes or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?* Still however there is great danger when we look too exclusively at one of the Divine requirements that we shall overrate its comparative importance and undervalue others. Thus a man may be so fearful that he shall commit an unpardonable sin by eating and drinking the emblems of Christ's body and blood unworthily that he may forget that while he neglects this ordinance he is living in habitual violation of a command of his Redeemer too plain to be mistaken *this do in remembrance of me*. And he may also neglect to estimate how great is the influence of his example upon sinners who are ever ready to seize upon anything that will set at rest their consciences. And furthermore though it is not surprising that the real Christian should for a time be perplexed concerning the duty of publicly professing Christ yet if the question remains for years unsettled does it not evince an alarming indifference concerning it? And does not every month's delay render the decision more difficult? We presume that every man in such a condition will allow that he and he alone is blamable for remaining in it. And our object in bringing forward the subject in this place is to endeavor to an awakening motive to such to an immediate and more earnest attention to the solemn and interesting enquiry. Whether the grand difficulty with such an one be a fear that he is not a Christian or whether the faults of those who are already professors of religion be the stumbling block - we shall not now enquire. But we invite him for one moment to look upon the realities of the judgment day and having fixed his eye steadily upon his judge and Redeemer we want him to respect the following language of that Redeemer when on earth: *Whosoever shall confess before men him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. And whosoever shall deny me before men him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

We proceed to address those who violate the Sabbath. This may be done by spending the day in amusements - by needlessly neglecting the public worship of God - or the reading of the Scriptures and in their stead attending to works of a merely secular character or by idleness and sleep - or by performing unnecessary journeys or in fine in any way in which we *do our own ways, find our own pleasure and speak our own words*. And many of those who thus break in upon the sacredness of the Lord's day are ready to justify themselves and to plead some excuse for their apparent disregard of the Divine commandments - *It was a works day they of necessity or of mercy*. Very well, we hope it was - but men are very apt to stretch these terms till their true definition were it given would be self interest. We by no means however wish at this time to decide that all such apologies for the apparent violation of God's day have no foundation. But we ask all who find such apologies necessary to come up with us and take their stand before the tribunal of Christ. And now suppose that the Lord of the Sabbath were to demand of this man the reason why he neglected public worship on such a Sabbath - or of that man why he spent the day in laying plans of worldly business - or a third why he visited his neighbor instead of his closet - or of a fourth why he journeyed on such a Lord's day - or of a fifth why he strolled about the fields? And now suppose that before these men should proceed with their apologies the same voice that



once issued from the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai should now repeat from the midst of the tribunal of God - *remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and all that in them is and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.* Now without condemning this man we would merely ask whether some of them after this solemn declaration would not hesitate to present their excuses and become sensible they were guilty? We leave it to their consciences to answer.

Shall we now address those who are careless and unconcerned about the state of their souls and bid them look to the great day of accounts and view themselves on the left hand of the judge guilty and self condemned? Already have they been called to look at the scene of a voice more powerful than mine by the voice of prophets, apostles, Christ and God - *As I live saith the Lord God I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die I O house of Israel?* And an apostle saith unto such - *awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light.* And who ever read it can forget that impressive and solemn description the Lord Jesus has given of the judgment day of the fate of the impenitent? If then the careless sinner is not alarmed at the call of God and Christ and inspired men can we hope to awaken him with our feeble voice? O he is fastened in the slumbers of Spiritual death and we leave him *to sleep on now and take his rest - assured that he cannot resist the shout of the archangel and the trump of God.*

But there is a probability that we shall be able to arrest the attention of the next description of men whom we address. These are such as have given to the acquisition of the world the undivided empire of their hearts. They are those who *have joined field to field and house to house till there is no place and they are left alone in the earth.* Any thing then that relates to their possessions will arouse their attention. And we are going to communicate to them an important fact concerning their silver and gold their houses and lands. We do not ask them to look at the judgment seat of Christ but let them gaze on a burning and a dissolving world. And where now are their treasures? Where those dear possessions they have so often gazed upon with the delight? Alas they are mingling in the common ruin. And when now shall they turn their eyes. Oh the tribunal of God is the only object in the Universe save the world in flames. And what if in that hour when they are compelled to abandon the world on which they have doted and relied, what if the words of Christ should rear to their minds, *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* Oh this sentence would fall upon their ears with a deafening emphasis!

We might proceed to call upon these men who are openly corrupt to direct their eyes for a moment to the tremendous realities of the day of God. We might say to the profane sinner - look up now to that almighty jealous God on his throne of judgment whom you have so often blasphemed look steadily upon him and then then vent forth those oaths and curses to which your tongue has become familiar! Why is it that you hide your head? Why is your soul smitten with horror? The eye of that God is no more turned upon you now than at any period of your life.

Or we might address the impenitent man in the language of the prophet, *Awake ye drunkard and weep and howl all ye drinkers of wine because of the new wine for it is cut off from your mouth.* We might challenge him to hold the intoxicating cup in his hand and at the same time look full upon the realities of judgment. And so might we call upon a host of characters who work wickedness greedily. But we should call in vain like the deaf adder they would stop their ears. We leave them then to fill up the measure of their iniquity. Yes we leave them in the hands of an angry God.

And now in concluding this subject it is natural to enquire what will be the effect of the effort that has been made this day to bring our opinions and practices to the ordeal of the judgment day. And we are constrained to say that probably the impression of the solemn scene of the judgment will be offered from our hearts ere another morning sun shall enlighten us and that whatever erroneous opinions we have espoused and corrupt practices we have followed we shall still retain them - and follow on the same beaten track from which the terrors of the Lord cannot turn us. I have reason to fear that such will be the effect or rather the failure of effect of these sermons on my own part and do you imagine my hearers that it will be different upon your own? O then if this subject does not awaken us what is there under heaven that can?

Did I say that these discourses have been read in vain? No - feeble and imperfect as they are they will have one effect - they will harden our hearts. They will render our conscience more invulnerable than ever. They will weaken the strings of God's Spirit and render it more difficult to awaken us hereafter. And though they may be forgotten on earth they will be remembered in the day of judgment.

Delivered

At Muddy Brook July 1821

At Conway June 1822

At Leverett June 1832

## Sermon 43 General View of the Gospel

[Sermon No. 43, "General View of the Gospel," John 18:38, 1821 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 7]

John 18:38

*What is truth?*

*[Interesting comments on total depravity, page 4, and of Calvinism near end.]*

You will some of you recollect my brethren that I preached a sermon some time since containing a general view of what I consider to be the system of religious truth found in the bible. The unfavorableness of the weather caused the meeting at that time to be thinly attended and it has been repeatedly suggested to me by individuals since that time that a repetition of the sermon would not be unacceptable. If ever it be proper to preach it again the present is the most proper period and I have concluded this morning to give it hoping that it may not prove wholly uninteresting.

Our faculties are so limited and the system of natural and revealed religion is so vast involving so many particulars and dependant upon so many arguments for its establishment that it is in general most profitable to confine our attention in a single sermon to a single link of the chain. Yet that we may not lose sight of the relation of one religious truth to another and that we may determine whether our opinions harmonize with one another or are contradictory, it is well also on some occasions to take a general view of religious truth and to recall to mind the leading arguments by which the great fundamental doctrines of faith are supported. And in considering the words of our text such is our object at this time. We have endeavoured to show you this morning that preparation of heart necessary for understanding the Scriptures aright - and now we mean to hold up before you that system of religious belief which in our opinion a man of genuine sincerity reading the bible in the manner we have described will find in it. We mean that he will embrace the great leading truths we are about to exhibit: not perhaps every article for we are not disposed to say that all of them are essential to salvation. For there are strict obstructions and difficulties in religious enquiries as well as moral and metaphysical and men may have different views of them and various modes of reconciling them while they coincide in those deep laid and eternal principles which are interwoven with the very texture of the Bible and concerning which the *wayfaring man though a fool need not err*.

We would be by no means be thought to be advocating that dangerous and cold hearted scepticism which under the terms abstrusity and speculation include the very essence of the Christian system - and which represents it as a matter of little importance what are a man's particular sentiments in religion. But though we do most sincerely remonstrate against such a principle yet we would not therefore rush into the other extreme and maintain that real Christians perfectly council in every opinion - because this is contrary to the experience of a world.

But from this digression we return to consider the question of Pilate *What is truth?* Christ did not then condescend to give an answer to so important an enquiry. But we have it in his word - to which we shall do well to take heed.

And the first grand foundation doctrine of the Bible and reason is the existence of one only God. The Scriptures assert his existence and refer us for proof to his works. That proof is overwhelming and indisputable. And from chance too we learn that the natural attributes of God are Eternity, Immutability, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Independence and that His moral attributes are Benevolence, Justice, Truth, Mercy, and Wisdom.

The next article of religious belief is that this God exercises a moral government over all the worlds and creatures he has made.

And the first thing implied in this government is that it extends to every action and event. This is clearly manifest from the declarations of Scripture, *He doeth according to his will in the the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice and the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

The next thing implied in a moral government is that the accountable rational subjects of it are free agents. By this is meant that they possess either naturally or by communication those powers that render them capable of obeying or disobeying the command of God. Without such a power certainly no being could be accountable for his conduct. And we know of no description of persons who have formally denied that men are free agents.

The third thing implied in God's moral government is that he rules as a sovereign. By this is not meant that he governs arbitrarily, capriciously and without reason. But simply that he orders all things according to the counsel of his own will. In other words that he directs all beings and events in conformity to one fixed plan and so as to produce a certain end. This constituent of his government is what is usually termed the doctrine of God's decrees. \* See def next page

And the views which in our apprehension are taught by reason and scripture on this subject are embraced in the following propositions:

1. God decrees independantly and irresistibly and gives no reason for his conduct any further than he pleases.

\* Def. The decrees of God are that eternal and unchangeable choice or purpose by which all things are brought into being.

2. All his decrees are for founded on the best reasons and intended to promote his own glory and the best good of the creature.

3. Foreknowledge and determination or decree exist simultaneously in the Divine Mind and one cannot be said to proceed and follow the other in the order of time.

4. All beings and events exist in exact accordance with the purpose or decrees of God. In other words God hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

5. This doctrine of the craze is not to be understood in such a sense that it shall make God the efficient author of sin - nor infringe the least upon the free agency of man; nor discourage human efforts.

This view of the most difficult subject of God's decrees is essentially that given by the late Dr. Dwight. And with him do we agree that, *if the doctrine is true if it is a doctrine revealed in the Scriptures; it cannot fail to be a proper subject of thought conversation and preaching.* With him also do we coincide in the opinion that, *perhaps it is unnecessary and would not be useful to make it a subject of very frequent discussion in the pulpit.*

And we also believe that some language has been used on the subject and some views taken of it that are unwarranted by scripture and whose tendency has been to perplex and irritate rather than convince. Thus God's decrees are said to be general and special – the special decrees being those that relate to the acceptance or rejection of mankind and the general decrees such as respect other things. Now we cannot see any ground for such a distinction. We see no difference in the decrees of God except that one respects this object and another that - that is the conversion and salvation of a man is decreed in just the same sense and manner as the fall of a sparrow or the descent of rain. (See Dwight's System of Theology Vol. 2)

Again God is said to will or decree because he wills. We object to this language because men are too apt to conclude from it that such a decree is arbitrary and tyrannical.

Further God is sometimes said to have elected a certain number to everlasting life without any foresight or faith and good works. Is God then omniscient and yet ignorant of the good works of the elect?

But we hasten to a third important doctrine of revelation – one indeed that in our opinion lies at the very foundation of the Gospel plan of salvation. We mean the doctrine of human depravity. The Bible represents the fall of our first parents as that fatal event by which the barriers between Earth and hell were broken down and the poison of sin was introduced into the veins of our first father to mingle with the heart's blood of his posterity. *By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned.* The threatened penalty was this *In the day man eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* Oh the infatuation of the woman!

*Forth reach to the fruit  
She plucked she ate, Earth felt the wound  
And nature from her seat, sighing through all her works  
Gave signs of woe that all was lost.*

[Source: Milton's Paradise Lost]

All would indeed be lost forever had it not been possessed that, *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.* And as it is we have all lost much. We have lost the image of God. We come into the world without any love of him or any tendency to love him. Nay more with dispositions that are opposite to his will. *We go astray as soon as we be born - in the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

The doctrine of human depravity as we understand it is this - that in consequence of Adam's Sin we derive from him a corrupt nature - that is a nature in which there is no holiness nor even a seed of holiness - but one which inclines us universally to break the commandments of God as soon as we are capable of moral action - a nature indeed so alienated from God that it never will love him unless there be an influence exerted upon it from heaven.

We do not however mean by this view of the subject that we are guilty of Adams sin or that we shall be punished for his sin. For we are taught in the Scriptures that, *the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father*. We are guilty only for indulging that corrupt nature derived from him and for our own sins shall we be punished: because God sets before us sufficient motives and promises of assistance to enable us to overcome our natural propensities. If then we indulge them we are without excuse and can cast no blame upon Adam or upon God.

Neither do we mean that man is depraved to the full extent of his powers. For then all would be equally bad. And we are ready to allow that some natural characteristics in man such as hunger thirst fear of suffering and desire of happiness are innocent and that others such as natural affections compassion generosity modesty and natural conscience are amiable. Being possessed of these men are capable of performing many kind and benevolent deeds to their fellow men that are praiseworthy in relation to this world may be styled good. But these things we contend no more prove holiness in men than do the same qualities and actions in the brute creation. Notwithstanding these man may be an enemy of God - dead in trespasses and sins and by nature a child of wrath. These epithets derive from the word of God we do most fearlessly applied to him who is unconverted. And so in our own feelings we have no objections to the term *total depravity*: but as this is not found in the Bible and sometimes conveys more to the mind than is intended we think it best to use it if at all but sparingly and reservedly.

If then men be this naturally and incorrigibly alienated from God if we involuntarily enquire in what way he can be reconciled? And Paul gives us the answer that, *we are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. There our attention is directed to the agent and his operation. And first who is the Holy Ghost?

We reply that he is God. *And Peter said unto Ananias why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost - thou hast not lied unto man but unto God*. Yet between God the father and the eternal Spirit there is a distinction not only nominal but real. *Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost*.

In the second place in what does regeneration consist? We have seen that man by sin has lost the image of God that is he is void of holiness and of all relish for it. Regeneration then consists in restoring this image of the soul and in giving man relish for spiritual objects. *And have put on the new man says Paul which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him*.

This renovation of the sinner is termed in Scripture, *being born again - becoming a new creature - passing from death unto life*, and it is described as absolutely essential to salvation. *Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot drink he entered into the Kingdom of heaven*. This same passage shows us also that the Spirit is the agent.

But here an interesting enquiry may be started. If man be naturally so depraved that nothing but the special influences of the Spirit can turn the current of his affections to love God, how can anyone from whom those influences are withheld be punishable for not doing that which is beyond his power? It is usual in this country to answer this question by saying that the sinner labors under no natural inability of becoming holy - that is he is not in the condition of a man who is commanded to walk without limbs: but his inability is a moral inability - in other words it consists wholly in the want of a disposition. And that he has all those natural powers that are necessary to enable him to serve and love his maker and Redeemer - and for the want of a disposition he is culpable. I did not say that this distinction between moral and natural inability furnishes no answer to this enquiry. But to say the least it is a metaphysical

answer and whether it be in reality satisfactory or not we believe that common minds are rather puzzled than satisfied with that. That man's inability to love God is merely moral that is merely the want of a disposition I readily grant: but when it is added that this disinclination is natural derived from Adam and that no man ever by his own strength overcomes it I feel in doubt whether it does not amount to the same thing as a natural inability - and therefore sense as some excuse for the sinner. Now in my apprehension it is the first importance that the impenitent man be made forcibly to feel that he is entirely and infinitely to be blamed for not loving God and therefore with my present views in addressing sinners I should in the first place show them as above that their inability is merely the want of a disposition and in the second place endeavor to prove the bible in conformity with the opinion of Baxter, Doddridge, Watts, Chalmers, Cooper and others that the Spirit of God had been striving with them during most of their lives and that if they had not resisted his influence they would have been converted.

And that Christ is now standing at the door of their hearts and knocking for admittance and that if they will but open the door he will come into them and be found in them the hope of glory. I have not inclined to this opinion because the distinguished men just named have adopted it: for I am sensible that others equally great have rejected it: but because I thought it was taught in the bible long before I knew what were the the sentiments of others. But whatever be the truth in regard to this point most firmly do I maintain that man and he alone is chargeable with the whole blame in not loving his maker and that his regeneration which is absolutely essential to salvation from beginning to end from the first conviction to the moment when the new heart is given is entirely the work of the Spirit.

But does the act of regeneration alone secure the pardon of sin and a title to heaven? Let the Apostle answer – *We are justified freely by grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus*. In this sentence we have the essence of the Gospel. And we inquire first who is Christ Jesus? This same Apostle replies - that he is *overall over all God blessed forever*. And unless we reject a great number of scriptures that are plain and explicit we must believe that, *He is the true God and eternal life*. But we read also of *the man Christ Jesus* and this also must we believe or throw aside much of the bible - and the necessity of Christ's being God and man will appear.

Secondly from the fact that he came into this world to make an atonement for the sins of men. Had he been a creature all his services would have been dear to God as his subject: and if he had not been man he could not have been touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Only as God and man was he capable of making a propitiation for the sins of the whole world - and of redeeming us from *the curse of the law being made a curse for us*. This has he done and one of the first acts of the regenerated heart is to exercise faith in his blood. And this leads us to state

Thirdly that the sinner is justified in the sight of God by his faith alone. The moment he exercises this looking to the righteousness of Christ as his only hope his sins are forgiven given - he is adopted into the family of God – the sanctifying influences of the Spirit are vouchsafed to him and he becomes, *an heir to an inheritance incorruptible undefiled and unfailing*. This is the doctrine so often and so ably argued by Paul particularly in Romans and Galatians - where he frequently draws this inference - *Therefore a man is justified by faith without works of love*.

But is it certain that the man who once exercises his faith and is regenerated will persevere to the end of life in a justified state? In other words has God promised that no one shall ever fall from a state of grace? This is a question concerning which there has been much and bitter contention. We do not however feel disposed to attach so much importance to this subject as many have done. And for this

plain reason - it is not a point that has much bearing upon Christian practice. We know of but one practical use to which the doctrine of the Saints perseverance can be applied - and that is to comfort the feeble-minded who are real believers. And even with such their distress generally originates in a doubt whether they were ever converted. Besides those who believe this doctrine and those who do not agree in this that men never will persevere unless they use the means appointed by God and that therefore it is the duty of every preacher of the Gospel to address Christians as the Apostles have done as if they were every moment in danger of losing the favor of God as to warn him, *he thinketh he standeth to take heed lest he fall*, and furthermore we presume that every believer in this doctrine will acknowledge that the Bible is not so full and clear on this subject as concerning some others and that some texts seem rather opposed to it. Still however after comparing scripture with scripture I am prepared to express my conviction that the doctrine is true, *being confident with the Apostle of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in Christians will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*.

We have now followed the believer to the close of life. And it is another important point of religious belief that *after death cometh the judgment*. In that Day will the dispensations of God to this world be finally closed when he *Shall separate the righteous from the wicked as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats and shall say to those on his right hand come ye being of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. And also to those on the left hand depart ye into everlasting fire. And these shall go away into endless and everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal*.

Does my hearers have we given an outline of that grand system of religious truth contained in the Bible. We know indeed that many systems very different from this have been professedly derived from the same source. What evidence then have I that I do not with a multitude believe a lie? There is no proof to the contrary but the sincere and decided convictions of my own heart. And though it may perhaps be thought somewhat Pharisaical yet I can hardly avoid stating that as far as I know myself the religious truth that have been just held before you were derived from the Bible in the manner that was exhibited to you in the former part of this day. This manner you will recollect consisted in giving up all confidence in the scriptural expositions of men of every name and nation and also in one's own unaided powers of discernment and in relying on the teachings of the Holy Spirit - and in reading the Scriptures with prayer and in receiving every fact clearly revealed. Perhaps however after all my sincerity was not genuine and I was given up to strong delusions. God only knoweth: and if such be the fact may He have mercy upon me and open my eyes before they *sleep the sleep of death*.

But which among the doctrines at this time exhibited are absolutely essential to salvation and without a belief of which no man will ever obtain it? Perhaps there is not a more difficult enquiry in theology. And indeed probably no answer can be given that will apply to every individual case: because the articles of belief will be more or less numerous according according to the degree of light enjoyed. But when men enjoy the unclouded light of the Gospel and its ordinances cannot every article of that system of doctrines which is absolutely essential to their salvation be marked out? We reply that where men have an opportunity to read and understand the bible they are bound to embrace every doctrine therein contained and have no promise of salvation without it. But you will reply that this does not answer the question proposed: because in explaining the language of the scriptures men differ radically and essentially. Now which of these exclamations shall we adopt? We have already shown you what is in our opinion the proper course to be pursued in order rightly to understand the Scriptures and have also exhibited the doctrines which we believe to be contained in them. But how widely men may differ in their sentiment and yet be Christians - to what extent the heart may be right while the head is wrong - and how great allowances are to be made for the influence of education. These points the bible does



not determine and we dare not attempt their decision. If called to act on any particular case we can and ought to decide whether we can hold communication with a man who denies this or that doctrine of the Gospel. But it is one thing to withdraw from the fellowship of a man and quite a different thing to decide that such an one cannot be a Christian. To judge the heart is the prerogative of God only - *There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Who art thou that judgeth another?*

Still however do we believe that there are certain grand essentials of religion in which good Christians of all ages have in reality if not in so many words agreed. Many attempts have been made to mark out these essentials. And we shall now present you with the opinions of two very eminent servants of God on the subject in their own words leaving it to you your own feelings to judge of their correctness. The first is an extract from the writings of the Reverend John Newton

*I set no value upon any doctrinal truth says he farther than it has a tendency to promote practical godliness. If others should think those things hindrances which I judge to be helps in this respect I am content they should go on in their own way according to the light God has given them, provided only they will agree with me and εν τω επαναγνεις [by our repentance]. If it should be asked which are necessary things I answer those in which the Spiritual worshippers of all ages and countries have been agreed. Those on the contrary are men subordinate matters in which the best men those who have been most eminent for faith prayers and humility and nearness to God always have been and still are divided in their judgments. Upon this plan I should think it no hard matter to draw up a form of sound words (whether dignified with the name of creed or no I care not) to which true believers of all sorts and wood unanimously subscribe. Suppose it ran something in the following manner: I believe that sin is the most hateful thing in the world that I and all men are by nature in a state of wrath and depravity utterly unable to sustain the penalty or to fulfill the commands of God's holy law and that we have no sufficiency of ourselves to think a good thought. I believe that Jesus Christ is the chief among ten thousands: that he came into the world to save the chief of sinners by making a propitiation for sin by his death by paying a perfect obedience to the law in our behalf and that he is now exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins to all that believe and that he ever liveth to make intercession for us. I believe that the Holy Spirit (the gift of God through Jesus Christ) is the son and only guide into all truth and the common privilege of all believers and under his influence I believe the holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation and to punish us thoroughly for every good work. I believe that love to God and to man for God's sake is the essence of religion and the fulfilling of the law: that without holiness no man shall be the Lord: that those who by a patient course in well doing seek glory honor and immortality shall receive eternal life: and I believe that this second is not of death but of grace ever to the praise and glory of that grace whereby he has made us accepted in the Beloved. Amen. (Newton's Works, vol. 2, page 233)*

The other extract is from the writings of Dr. Thomas Scott. Having spoken of the Lutheran Helvetian Gallick Scotch and Belgick confessions of faith he thus adds *Numbers in these kingdoms (Great Britain) classed in general among the Calvinists almost exactly in these respects answer the description above given of the Lutherans etc. The foundation of their religion is laid un humiliation as fallen sinners: this prepares them for receiving the gospel: they agree with their more Calvinistick brethren in almost every thing except election and final perseverance concerning which many of them are rather negative than positive opponents: and we feel no repugnance to associate with them as our beloved fellow Christians: which we cannot do with those who approximate to Pelagianism; and who favor the opinion of salvation in any way except by the living faith in Christ and by the regeneration and sanctification of the Holy Spirit. (Reply to Tomline, vol. 2, p. 501)*

We shall close this discourse with this one inference – *The gospel plan of salvation is purely a system of grace.*

This whole system is described by Paul in a single sentence. And a more grand and comprehensive sentence we know not in human language. Standing on the isthmus of this world and having the secret counsels of the eternal mind laid open to view the apostle by one vigorous stretch of intellect traces out the chains of the Divine dispensations through that eternity which is past and that eternity to come. *Whom he did foreknow them he did predestinate and whom he did predestinate them he also called them he also justified and whom he justified them he also glorified.*

Here do we perceive the whole works of man's salvation to flow from unmerited grace. This first moved God to determine from eternity that some should be saved. This awakened his sword against the man that was his fellow. This sent down the special influences of the Holy Spirit to call the sinner from among the spiritually dead. This applied to his pollutions the blood of Christ and declared him justified through his righteousness and this will hereafter add joy to joy and glory to glory through eternity.

And do we indeed see the beauty and the grandeur of the Christian system and admire it? And is this administration merely intellectual? Or are we delighted with the plan of salvation because we hope to be made partakers of it? Oh if we stop short of an actual conformity of heart and life to this system in vain do we assent to the doctrines of the cross - in vain do we gaze on their grandeur and harmony – *We have neither part nor lot in the matter* and it will be our aggravated misery to *behold and wonder and perish!*

Delivered

At Conway March 1821

## Sermon 48 Motives to Reconciliation with God

[Sermon No. 48, "Motives to Reconciliation With God," II Corinthians 5:20, 1821 Mar, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 7]

II Corinthians 5:20

*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

But there is no quarrel between me and God. I have never disbelieved his existence nor his attributes nor disputed his right to govern the universe he has made and upholds. Nay nor I believe in the scriptures this God has given us and have been instructed in them from my earliest years. And I receive as truth that, *God gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have eternal everlasting life.* God - He is my father and is doing everything for my best good. I must be a monster of gratitude then to fight against him. But this language *be reconciled to God* implies that I am at enmity with him. So far from this that I feel as sacred reverence in contemplating his character and I am filled with admiration when looking at the magnitude symmetry and harmony of his works. Instead of hating this God how is it possible to avoid loving him - and indeed I always have had a love for his characters since I became acquainted with it. I am sensible indeed that I sometimes abuse the blessings he has bestowed upon me. But he has given me my appetites and passions and will not be excessively strict and punishing any little excesses to which they may drive us. And these excesses do not by any means proven an enmity against God: For in indulging them I never once thought of opposing him - nay at such times perhaps the idea of God does not enter my mind. And it is most absurd to say that a man is fighting a battle when he does not even think of his enemy.

This my hearers is the language of the natural heart when it is caviling against the Scriptures. And if any one find such feelings rising within him on reading our text he may rest assured that he is the person to whom the Apostle speaks. The fact that God calls upon men to be reconciled to him implies as every one will acknowledge that there is a warfare between Him and them. Some we would hope indeed have listened to the overtures of reconciliation that have been made to them and are at peace with their maker. But we pass no hard judgment when we say that the great majority in every land still maintain a resolute and bitter contest with the God that made them. And most of these as resolutely deny the existence of any such controversy. We shall therefore in the first place present some of the arguments by which this fact, which is implied in the text, is made out - and secondly present some motives for becoming reconciled unto God.

Let it however be premised that we shall not convince an individual of the hostility of his heart to God's nor persuade one to make his peace with God unless the Spirit render and our word impressive and effectual.

We are first to show that the heart of man by nature is in a state of enmity against God. By this we do not mean that there is at all times a perceptible contrast between the heart of man and his Maker. The inhabitants of the different countries may be the most bitter enemies to each other and yet while both parties remain at home no battle will be fought. But whenever they meet there will be a collision. So it is

in the case of man. By his enmity against God we mean that the bent of his inclination is directly opposite to God's will – God's will chooses one thing and man's inclination another. Now it is obvious that if God's will be kept out of sight and man be left to follow his chosen way he will not perceive the opposition and hence conclude there is none. But if God manifests himself to the sinner - if he stands in his path as did once his Angel before Balaam with a drawn sword - then will there be a visible conflict. And such a manifestation of God's will is made to man whenever his conscience is made to see the extent the inflexible demands and the purity of his law. Then will he muster up all his energies and strive with his Maker.

The first proof of the natural enmity of man's heart to God is the direct assertions of Scripture. We thus quote from the first part of the second chapter of Ephesians, *But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace who hath made both one* (that is both Jews and Gentiles) *and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace* (that is between Jews and Gentiles) *and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.* Here it seems was an enmity not only between Jews and Gentiles but also between them both and God and to slay this enmity Christ died.

We have already stated that the text supposes a natural enmity in the heart of God. In the context it is said *God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses onto them.* Here we perceive the Apostle makes no exception: but in the term world includes all mankind. And so in his Epistle to the Colossians he says, *And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.* Not an individual in that church is freed from the heavy charge of being once an enemy of God. And if as some assert this phrase *enemy of God* was applied by Paul only to those who were formerly given up to the grossest abominations and not to those who were morally amiable - if this be correct is it not a little strange that in the whole Colossians Church and also in the Corinthian and Ephesian churches to whom Paul addresses the same indiscriminate language - among all these is it not singular that every member that had formerly been notoriously corrupt - while among the moral and amiable not one became a Christian?

In the Epistle of James we have this assertion: *Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* Now is it not a notorious fact that every man does by nature love the world and is therefore its friend? Did you ever hear of one who found it contrary to his natural inclination to indulge in the pleasures of the world or to except of its possessions or its honors? Do not all men on the contrary through a natural impulse pursue these things ardently?

Paul in his Epistle to the Romans says, *The carnal mind is enmity against God - is not subject to his law neither indeed can be.* In other words, *the fleshly mind is enmity against God.* Some cavil concerning this most decided passage and say that by the term flesh the Apostle does not include the whole man but merely the animal nature. In the fifth chapter of Galatians the same Apostle puts down the works of the flesh among which are *adultery, fornication, murders, and lasciviousness.* Now in the seventh chapter of Mark Christ says, *For from within out of the heart proceed adulteries fornications, murders, lasciviousness.* Paul then includes the heart in the term flesh or else we must suppose Christ to be mistaken.

We shall close this argument from the assertion of scriptures on this point (though numberless passages might be given) by the words of Christ to his disciples, *If the world hate you you know that it hated me*

*before it hated you – He that hateth me, hateth my Father also.*

The second argument in support of the position that man naturally is in a state of enmity with God is derived from the fact that while regenerate he does not perform what God requires of him.

The first great commandment given to men is that, *they love the Lord their God with all their hearts and mind and strength*. Without such a love no man will pretend that he acts conformably to God's will. And that unregenerate men have it not is evident from the following considerations.

Supreme love to God will lead a man to seek communion with him by prayer. This is the only method in which flesh and blood can have any intercourse with that Being who is an eternal Spirit. Now whatever object a man ardently loves whether it be houses or lands or wife or children - the presence of that object will be sought after and enjoyed. Therefore if he loves God above everything besides he will delightfully and habitually pray unto Him in public in the family and above all in his closet. And besides prayer is repeatedly commanded by God. He will be enquired of - he will be wrestled with - he will be prayed unto without ceasing; and here is an additional motive to bring the man who loves Him before his mercy seat. But it is a well known fact that unregenerate men do not thus habitually and fervently pray to God. Their own consciences tell them that they do not go into their closets and pray unto their Father who seeth in secret unless in times of danger and distress and they know also that they feel an aversion to the practice. Is not this then a decisive evidence that they do not love God?

Another natural effect of supreme love to God is repentance. We have a friend whom we sincerely and ardently love: but in a fit of anger we have cruelly wounded his feelings and injured his reputation. At length we perceive our error and what man is there whose heart is not harder than the very adamant who will not weep over his ingratitude and cruelty? Now every man will acknowledge that he has committed many sins against his Father and Friend in heaven and that he has been in some things ungrateful towards Him whose tender mercies have been over him all his life. How then can he refrain from smiting upon his breast and saying *I have sinned - What shall I do unto thee O thou preserver of men?* Yet the majority of men have no such feelings as these. They are not sensible that they have injured God so deeply as to require this repentance: but on the other hand conceive that they have done nearly as well as they could. What does this insensibility prove? Most surely it proves that these persons do not supremely love God.

A third material effect of supreme love to God is that, *whether we eat or drink whatsoever we do we should do all to his glory*. This principle again may be partially illustrated by the case of an earthly friendship. If a friend be very dear to us we feel tender of his reputation and shall refrain from everything that would injure it and be willing to do much to promote it especially if thereby we advance our own interest. And these same feelings may be transferred to God. In promoting his glory man promotes his own happiness and in dishonoring him he injures his own peace. If then his affections be supremely fixed on God the man will be continually enquiring of himself whether his actions be for God's glory. In whatever enterprise he is about to engage he will first enquire whether it will promote God's glory. If it will not he will abandon it. In short he will endeavor to glorify God in his body and in his Spirit. And in doing this he is merely following the example set him by the whole creation every part of which contributes to display the glory of its Creator.

But we venture to affirm that unregenerate men do not act upon this principle at all. They do not when engaging in business have any reference to God's glory - but to their own convenience and interest. We ask such men to look back upon their lives and see if amid their many enterprises for the acquisition of

the world they have ever in a single instance paused at its commencement and enquired whether that pursuit would be for the glory of God. O I read in that fallen countenance the answer conscience gives to this enquiry. And indeed it is a most solemnly yet certain truth that if you have not acted on this Apostolic principle you have not love God.

We think these three considerations establish the fact that unregenerate men do not love God - supremely. When they *know their Lord and Master's will they are not careful to perform it*. They disregard the most solemn the most pressing commands of their rightful Sovereign. And now let me ask what stronger evidence can be given that they have rebelled against his government - that their inclinations are opposite to his will and that therefore they are in a state of enmity to him?

We shall just mention a third argument to prove the natural enmity of the heart to God. It is derived from the fact that Christians readily acknowledge such an enmity while those who give no evidence of piety resolutely deny it.

It is acknowledged on all hands that real believers are the friends of God. They are possessed of certain feelings that give evidence of this. Now it would seem a very easy matter for such men to determine whether they possess these feelings all their lives or whether they were once the reverse. While on the other hand the unregenerate do not as we have shown under our second argument possess these evidences of their love to God. They have no such feelings - they cannot form any idea of them and therefore will be disposed to doubt their existence. And hence will they form a more favorable opinion of their hearts than Christians do of their own - because they are ignorant of them. Now is

Now is not a fact that those believers of every age of the world who have been most eminent for piety and humility have most firmly believed that they were once enemies of God and that the cross of Christ alone could subdue that enmity. And is it not also the fact that those who have made no pretensions to personal religion from the most amiable and moral to the most notoriously corrupt have almost uniformly opposed the doctrine with violence? The fact is most true and most striking.

The reality of a settled enmity of the heart of man by nature to God is then most unquestionably established. Man is at war with his Maker and Redeemer. Yet this God who might by a single blast of his mouth sweep his foes and of annihilation condescends to beseech them to give over the content to submit to his easy terms and be reconciled to him. And we shall now proceed to present some motives to sinners to comply with these proposals and to terminate the unequal and shameful contest between their hearts and their God.

And the first motive is that the terms God offers are easy and reasonable

When there has been a contest between two nations the conquering party often and very reasonably reasonably demand as a condition of peace that their antagonist shall make them amends for the mischief they have caused. But widely different is the requirement of God from man. Man has indeed in the contest brought misery and ruin upon one of the noblest works of God, the immortal soul - and he has made an effort to rob God of his glory and rightful authority - and he has set a most pernicious example to the Universe and leagued himself with the roaring lion - the eternal enemy of God. Most righteously then is an atonement due from man to his God. But this Being who is infinite in condescension and mercy makes no such demand but has himself provided the atonement by sending his Eternal Son to suffer and die. And all that is required of man is to believe in him. *He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life.*

Again it is often demanded of one nation by another that some pledge be given to ensure sincerity and good will. But God dispenses with the requirement and offers his Holy Spirit to produce in man a love to his character and to seal the believer unto the day of redemption.

Thus does God in his overtures to rebellious man take upon himself to perform the hardest conditions of reconciliation and all that he demands of man may be summed up in one short sentence, *repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*.

But is it enough to say that these conditions are easy and reasonable? Are they not glorious? They do not offer merely a reconciliation to the favour of God but the everlasting enjoyment of him. He who accepts them obtains thereby an heirship to *an inheritance incompatible undefined and unfeeling*.

The second motive that urges sinners to an immediate reconciliation with God is that the present is the most favorable time.

It is certain that God will never offer any easier terms. *God is not man that he should lie neither the Son of Man that he should repent. Hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good? This God has declared that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him. Behold now is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation. Heaven earth shall pass away: but his word shall not pass away.* It is then madness the enemy of God to cherish the faintest hope that he will ever alter one jot or tittle those conditions contained in his Word. He has already conceded every thing consistent with his attributes and having once promulgated the articles of reconciliation they will remain as unchangeable as the dawn of the Medes and Persians.

But there is another more alarming consideration. The man who is God's enemy today if unreconciled will be more his enemy tomorrow. It is the case with every natural feeling that if not checked it will become stronger with age. The more rooted the love of sin in the heart the more opposed will be that heart to God's will. And we know that sin becomes stronger and stronger in every unregenerate heart with every new day. So that the man who has resisted the strivings of God's Spirit this year will resist a more powerful influence the next if it be upon him. He who finds the terms of reconciliation with God unpleasant this week will find them more disgusting the next. And thus is it evident that every hour's delay will widen the already fearful breach between him and God and render his reconciliation more arduous and uncertain.

We urge the enemy of God in the third place to an immediate reconciliation because the time granted him for effecting this work is short.

When a truce is agreed upon between two armies and the one proposes terms of peace to the other a certain time is given them for taking the articles into consideration. And so God has granted to man a day of grace. With all men this term is ended with life - with some it terminates sooner. Life however is uncertain in the extreme and no man can say that he shall have another hour for making his peace with God. The period then which God gives to men for determining whether they are will submit to his terms of reconciliation does not extend beyond the present moment. That is there is no promise no security that the next moment may not be too late. God may withdraw the strivings of his Spirit or he may cut the thread of life. Every promise of mercy in the Bible to the impenitent is confined to the passing day. Not one reaches to the morrow. How dreadfully uncertain man is it whether the enemy of God if he neglect the present moment ever have an opportunity of being restored to the favor of his Creator. Unknown to him the inexorable sentence may even now be passed. *Let him alone - he is joined to his*

*idols – thou fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

The last motive urging the enemy of God to an immediate reconciliation with him is that this God will certainly be ultimately and everlastingly conqueror.

The history of the world has exhibited many examples when, *one has chased a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight*. And many a Goliath is has fallen beneath the sword of a David. But what a picture have we before us when we contemplate man striving with his Maker! Many a creature of yesterday - consumed before the moth - not able to protect his life against the slightest accident - and whose strength is weakness - this mushroom being O the infatuation of men! This being presumes to sear the standard of rebellion against heaven and to stand out in stubborn defiance of the eternal omnipotent God - God who made heaven and earth - God who rides upon the wings of the wind and shakes the world with his thunder - God before whom *the nations are driven asunder - the everlasting mountains are scattered and the perpetual hills do bow*. Yes and this weak deluded being man obstinately persists in this contest - the struggling of the clay against the potter - and yields up his life rather than submit. And not only this life but the eternal life to come. For when once his sword bathed in heaven falls upon his enemies the contest is terminated at once and forever. Reserved in chains under darkness they will wait the judgment of the last day when these chains will be [????].

Delivered

At Conway March 1821

At Sunderland April 1821

At Ashfield September 1821



## Sermon 49 Efficacy of the Cross

[Sermon No. 49, "Efficacy of the Cross," Ephesians 2:16, 1821 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 7]

Ephesians 2:16

*Having slain the enmity thereby.*

This is the enmity that exists in the hearts both of Jews and Gentiles that is in all men naturally against God – And the instrument by which it is slain is the Cross of Christ. Paul is here addressing Gentiles and in the context he says – *Wherefore remember that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands - That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are more nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partitions between us (that is the wall between Jews and Gentiles). Having abided in his flesh the enmity even the law of commandments contained in ordinances for to make in himself of twain one new man so making peace: And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross having slain the enmity thereby.* Here are described an enmity between Jews and Gentiles and also between both these and God. And it seems this double hatred was destroyed by the cross. That there was a bitter hostility between Jews and Gentiles no man will dispute, because the united voice of history declares it. But that men are by nature the enemies of God is a doctrine which the unrenewed heart regards as extravagant and untrue. And when it is added that the cross of Christ is the only instrument by which this enmity can be dissolved this appears to such a man to be adding mystery to mystery and absurdity to absurdity.

Supposing the affections of man's heart to be utterly alienated from God and that a repugnance is felt against this character so strong that the unaided powers of nature will never compensate it becomes indeed an interesting enquiry by what means God can bring back to his love and obedience a creature so refractory and hostile. And we presume that man without revelation could form no opinion what this mode would be – Indeed we are told that into this subject even *the angels desire to look*. Man being a free agent it is impossible that he could even be compelled to love his Maker – God might indeed force his obedience but it would be the service of a slave – not that free will submission He seeks. Or God might hold over the hearts of men his terrors and thus bring them to fear him: but such an enigma could never work love in an alienated heart. Yet God takes neither of these courses. But he presents a plan for reconciling his creatures entirely new – and on the first view apparently inefficacious but in reality wonderfully powerful. He exhibits his only Son bleeding upon the cross and bids man look to him that the enmity of his heart may be slain and his feelings become reconciled to God.

To the Jews however the cross of Christ is a stumbling block and to the Greek foolishness. They do not perceive its efficacy and believe that it can have none. Let us then investigate the manner in which this cross slays the enmity of man's heart to God.

In devising a plan for reconciling a rebellious world unto himself there appears to have been an obstruction on the part of God and an obstruction on the part of of man. Now should God indicate the

honor of his violated law so that he could consistently pardon the rebel. And how could he move the affections of that rebel to love him? The cross was the grand remedy that would resolve both these difficulties.

This in the first place under it consistent with the attributes of God to pardon his enemies. This in the second place processes for those enemies the reconciling and converting influences of the Holy Spirit. This in the third place melts the hearts of these enemies to love God by exhibiting most conspicuously this good news.

By the cross of Christ we mean all the suffering of body and mind that he endured while incarnate. We mean the hardships of his friendless shelterless condition – the persecutions, insults and reproaches of his enemies – the overpowering agony of his soul in Gethsemane and his conflict with death upon the cross. We mean also his active obedience – his incessant efforts to glorify his Father in heaven – to do good to the bodies and souls of men – his triumphing over the temptation of Satan and his submission to a cruel death. All these things are comprehended in the phrase *cross of Christ*. And these sufferings and this obedience rendered it consistent for God to propose conditions of reconciliation to his enemies.

God gave laws to the angels and the power to observe them. A pair of these angels violated those laws and God *secured them in chains under darkness for the judgement of the great day*. God placed men in Paradise and gave him a like law and a like power to keep it. But man too violated it - and the Universe the innumerable armies of holy beings that surmount the throne of God waited to see him also reserved in chains under darkness – or rather they waited to see him swept from existence: for the penalty of the law he had broken was, *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*. Yet God had purposes of mercy for this criminal. But his holy law had been broken that law which had been promulgated before the universe and for the honor of which all holy beings were jealous. What if God then had published an act of pardon to man merely on condition of his repentance without making any satisfaction to a violated law (so plain and unqualified). What think ye would have been the effect of such a proposal upon the universe of beings? They had seen the singing angels cast off to suffer the interminable (and unyielding) penalty of the law they had broken – while man sinning against a law equally strict and being equally guilty - is restored to Divine favour without making any satisfaction for his offence. What is become of the unchangeableness of God's word which declared without qualification that if man ate of the forbidden fruit he should surely die? And why this greater severity toward Devils than men?

Such we may suppose would be the reasonings of the universe had God demanded no satisfaction of man for a violated law. And what might have been the influence of such thoughts upon even holy beings we cannot say. An atonement therefore must be made or man must be punished. But this was beyond the power of a creature whose most perfect services would all be due to his Creator. Therefore it was necessary that the sword of God should be awakened, *against the man that was his fellow*. And therefore Christ explained, *Lo I came to do thy will O God*.

When this mystery of redemption began to be developed no doubt the angels of God waited in suspense to see its completion. For it was a deed before unheard of in the universe - it was a mystery of love. And when they saw the only begotten Son of God the brightness of his Father's glory and the express anger of his person leave his throne in heavenly glory and assuming the garb of a criminal voluntarily present his sinless head to the shafts of injured justice as a substitute for man - and actually *bear our sins in his own body on the tree - and be made a curse for us*. When they saw him subjected to the power of Satan and led by him into the wilderness to be tempted when they saw the arrows of God's fierce displeasure against him penetrating his very soul in Gethsemane and when amid the bloody inflictions of crucifixion they saw his greatest agony to be because his God had forsaken him – O then

would with these holy kings reiterate his last words, *It is finished!* Yes it is finished! The broken law of God is satisfied – *it is finished* - the penalty due man has fallen on the Son of God – It is finished. God can now be just while he justifies the believer in Jesus. Let now the scepter of mercy be extended to man. Let him be saved if his will be saved and all the universe shall rejoice - and once more with a lower and a sweeter harmony than that which *a multitude of the heavenly host* raise on the plains of Bethlehem would the angels of God repeat, *Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace goodwill towards men.*

From this representation my hearers you will doubtless perceive in what manner the cross of Christ renders it consistent with the attributes of God to propose terms to reconciliation to his enemies. While the violations of his law remained unatoned for God could manifest himself to man and no other view than as a consuming fire: but now that this atonement is made - now that the universe have seen God's displeasure against sin spending its fury upon the head of a substitute - God can look through this Saviour upon rebels and propose to them conditions of pardon. Nay so complete is the atonement that he can even condescend to beseech them to a reconciliation.

Nor does he stop here. For in the second place this cross of Christ renders it consistent for God to send into the hearts of his enemies the reconciling and converting influences of the Holy Spirit.

Men are not the enemies of God because there is anything odious in his character or because he has done anything that ought to excite their resentment. What is his character? An assemblage of perfections (or rather the perfection of perfections) containing every thing in its highest degree that can be can awaken the love of an uninitiated taste. And what has been his conduct towards men? A constant stream of mercies - a constant series of miracles of long suffering ever since he said, *Let us make man in our own image.* Why then is man the enemy of God? Because our tastes are uninitiated and we cannot discern nor relish and put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter spiritual beauty nor proportion. Because we love darkness rather than light and because our hearts are dead to the emotions of gratitude towards God.

It is evident then that even after an atonement is wrought out by the Son of God and this is made known to man with the offers of mercy through this one sacrifice it is evident that man's heart will remain the same alienated thing as before unsubdued by this miracle of grace. If then some other step be not taken to work a revolution in that heart Christ has died in vain. And it is no ordinary instrument that can effect this. For the whole current of the affections running counter to the will of God and bearing along with it the whole soul, this must be checked stopped and made to flow in the opposite direction. It is indeed what the Scriptures call a new creation and therefore demands the same Almighty agent as the original creation for its accomplishment. How shall it be obtained from man? He certainly can do nothing to merit it. Merit it! He whose attitude towards God is that of rebellion – he who does not wish it - he who would resist it if offered. Here again the wisdom of the plan of redemption through the cross is manifested. In the life and death of Christ - in his humiliation suffering and active obedience there is enough of merit not only to render the pardon of God's enemies consistent with his glory and the the good of the universe but to prove also the Holy Spirit, *to convince the world of sin of righteousness and of judgment to come*, to enter the heart of the rebel and implant the image of the Lord God to subdue its resistance - to dwell in it and sanctify it and to seal the elect of God unto the day of redemption. He it is who casts a light into the mind of the sinner by which God is manifested to his heart in the purity of untarnished holiness hating iniquity and preparing for his obstinate enemies an insupportable retribution – And He it is also who holds up before the eye of the humbled convicted sinner the cross of Christ as the only anchor of his hope. Without this agent indeed man's unrelenting heart would forever

remain hardened in defiance of its Maker.

But it is a decree of God that man shall be a free agent: and therefore in the work of conversion the Spirit operates upon the heart in such a manner as not to infringe the freedom of the will and treat the man as a machine. Love and obedience to God which are the result of his influences must be a willing love and obedience. It must be there chiefly by representing and enforcing motives that the citadel of man's heart is to be carried and connected to the services of God. What then is the motive which the Spirit urges most successfully upon the enemies of God? What is that aspect in which God must be viewed by the sinner that will dissolve his enmity? *To lay upon us the demand of satisfaction for his violated law, says a late distinguished writer, could not do it. To press home the claims of justice upon any sense of authority within us, could not do it. To bring forward in threatening array the terrors of his judgment and of his power against us could not do it. To unveil the glories of that throne where he sitteth in equity and manifest to his guilty creatures the awful inflexibilities of his truth and righteousness could not do it. To look out over the cloud of vengeance and trouble our darkened souls as he did those of the Egyptians of old with the aspect of a menacing Deity could not do it. To spread the field of eternity before us all and tell us of those dreary abodes where each criminal hath his bed in hell and the centuries of despair which press over him are not counted because there are reasons role and the unhappy victims of the tribulation and the wrath and the anguish know that for the mighty burden of the sufferings which weigh upon them there is no end and no mitigation; this prospect appalling as it is and coming home upon the belief with all the characters of the most immaculate certainty could not do it. The affections of the inner man remain as unmoved as ever under the repeated and successive influence of all these dreadful applications. There is not one of them, which instead of conciliating does not stir up a principle of resistance and subject any human being to the treatment of them all and to nothing else and he may tremble at God and shrink from the contemplation of God and feel an overpowering awe at the thought of God when that thought visits him; but we maintain that not one particle of influence has been sent into the heart to make him love God. Under such application as these we can conceive the creature gathering in new energy from despair and mustering up a stouter defiance than ever to the God who threatens him.* (Thomas Chalmers?)

But my brethren there is one aspect in which God presents himself to this alienated world which will soften the heart of the most obdurate when they pass and their eyes steadily upon him. *It is God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them.* This is the third mode in which the cross contributes to slay the enmity of the natural heart. And it has this effect because when God is looked at in the face of Jesus Christ it is an exhibition of the most astonishing kindness and benevolence. We there see him more purely by compassion for ungrateful aliens laying aside the terrors of vindictive majesty and putting on the garments of compassion that he may convince us that he earnestly desires our salvation and that he has made the way plain and easy for reconciliation. We see him in the attitude of entreaty stretching forth to us the arms of everlasting mercy - holding up to our view his only Son spared from his bosom and dying on the cross for our offenses - and tendering to us the the eternal Spirit to implant within us new dispositions. It is not possible to look on God thus presented us without a conviction that he loves us amid all our enmity and in gratitude towards him has loved us from eternity and that he has exhausted the riches of his benevolence to carry into execution a plan for our restoration to his favour. Amid all our wanderings he has followed us and guarded us as the apple of his eye and though we ungrateful acknowledge not his protection still he will not give over but follow us in as a suppliant and with the most winning tenderness entreats us to return to the bosom of his love - and to the internal enjoyment of his kingdom. O this is a view of God - a view that is presented only through the cross - which if it be exhibited to man's heart by the Spirit he cannot resist. No - hostile

as he is to God and stuck as he is in an almost impenetrable shield of sin - this view he cannot resist. So much condescension - so much tenderness - so much forbearance - and that too in the Almighty God who is able to destroy the soul and body in hell. O this must melt as it does melt the stubbornness and the hardness and the enmity of the heart. That heart which not all the threatenings and the terrors of Omnipotence could move yields to the picture of a God of love.

And it is such a picture as this that the ministers of Christ are permitted and commanded to hold up before the meanest and most abandoned of Adam's race. No matter how long and debased - still there is a God of infinite mercy *beseeking you in Christ to be reconciled to him* with all the tenderness and earnestness of a kind father for his prodigal son the Lord feels towards you the yearnings of infinite compassion and you hear him exclaiming, *How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are mingled together.*

But O man whoever thou art, presume not to approach this God in any other way than by the cross of Christ. Presume not to come unshielded by a Mediator and Intercessor into the audience chamber of that Being who is jealous for his holiness and whom no man can see and live. For the Spiritual purities of that place will flash upon thy naked soul like a consuming fire - and you will wither beneath the glance of an unreconciled God. It is by the cross only that your natural enmity to God can be slain and your soul be prepared for his presence. If the cross be to you foolishness or a stumbling block and you are resolved not to receive Jesus Christ and him crucified depend upon it that God never will be reconciled to you. There is but this only avenue into heaven. On every other side of the walls of the New Jerusalem you will find the flaming sword of God's justice turning every way to prevent the approach of all sin and impurity.

But my hearers is it not too true that to the great majority of man the cross is foolishness? Notwithstanding the miracles of Divine condescension and mercy that are displayed in this plan of redemption - notwithstanding Christ has removed every barrier on the part of God to their reconciliation and has purchased for them the influences of the Holy Spirit the Comforter and has taken away every terror that to the eye of sin appears in the character of God and closed his countenance with the kindness of mercy and they winning softness of pity - and notwithstanding the ministers of the Gospel are commanded to carry round this picture and hold it up before every son and daughter of Adam still do the great majority turn away from the sight with a contemptuous smile or with surprised indifference. Still in the heart of man unmelted and unsoftened nay there is stirred up in it a more determined hatred than ever.

But we will not therefore O sinners give over our own efforts. No - faithful to the command of our Redeemer we will again and again entreat you to look upon God in Jesus Christ though you flee from us we will follow you - though you spurn us from your presence still will we lay hold of the skirts of your garments and hold before you the picture of the cross - though you close the door of your dwellings upon us we will stay without and persist to use the glories of Christ. And when you lie upon the bed of death we will come to you and exhibit the fullness there is in Christ as the last sound you hear on earth shall be our voice beseeching you to believe in God.

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[This may be the end of the original sermon. Two additional pages follow.]

And if such a sacrifice has been made then how deeply affected should those hearts be whose enmity has been slain by the cross every time it is brought distinctly before them by the emblems of the holy communion! Can the man who has been rescued from shipwreck or robbers or any extreme peril ever have the scene or the authors of his rescue brought before him without strong emotion? But however important any earthly deliverance compared with the redemption of your souls my brethren from the agonies of the second death? And now that the emblems of that great deliverance await your reception does not your heart burn within you when you come so near that Saviour who bore for you the curse of a violated law? Oh if no special emotion is awakened in your bosoms as Jesus Christ is set forth anew today crucified before you for you then your heart is not like those of the hundred forty and four thousand while on earth or on any other hearts indeed that have ever reached heaven. You are guilty of ingratitude that blackest of all sins: ingratitude not towards one who sacrificed all the riches and glories of heaven to save you. Oh if there be one sin that has no alienation or apology – one sin that fills all holy beings with horror and makes even devils tremble it is that of forgetfulness of Jesus Christ and ingratitude towards him among his professed friends. Is it cherished by one heart before me today? Then sackcloth wielding becomes us all for the curse of God rests upon us and nothing but the fear of penitence can take it away.

Delivered

At Conway March 1821

At Deerfield May 1821

At Greenfield June 1821

At Shelburne February 1822

At Williamsburg July 1822

At Montague July 1823

At Amherst West Parish June 1837

At Amherst College June 1838

At Amherst College February 1848

At Amherst College November 1856

At Amherst North Parish September 1 1859

## Sermon 51 Preaching the Gospel

[Sermon No. 51, "Preaching the Gospel," II Timothy 4:12, 1821 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 7]

II Timothy 4:1 - 2

*I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his Kingdom: Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove rebuke exhort with all long - suffering and doctrine.*

*[Interesting thoughts on preaching; four days to prepare two sermons, etc. This sermon was delivered on Hitchcock's first sabbath as pastor of the Conway church.]*

This is a solemn message and delivered too in a most solemn manner. In the ardor of the Apostle's feelings and amid the sunshine of an unhesitating faith he seems to forget the barrier between earth and heaven and introduces Timothy his son in the faith at once into the presence of God and Christ and the universe of angels and men and calling upon these as witnesses he presents to him a summary of his duties as a minister of the Gospel - reminding him that before this assembly at the termination of his office he must give an accounting of his stewardship. And before that same assembly does this Apostle charge every minister of the Gospel in the same manner and language. And the first article in this charge is *preach the Word*.

*After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* This is the language of this same apostle in another place and we perceive from it that preaching is the grand instrument in the hands of God for the reconciliation of the world. The Jews in the primitive time did indeed require *a sign* and the Greeks sought after wisdom: but the Apostles still adhere to their command to *preach Christ crucified* although this was *to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness*. For they had not yet forgotten the words of the Lord Jesus - *go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*.

To preach the word and to preach the gospel are terms of the same import and they imply the faithful plain and earnest declaration of all revealed truth – of every doctrine and every precept contained in the Scriptures of the old and new testaments. Every part of these *is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrines for reproof for correction for instruction in righteousness*. It is the command of God to Jeremiah, *Stand in the court of the Lord's house and speak unto all the cities of Judah which come to worship in the Lord's house all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word*. And it was the consolation of Paul that he could triumphantly appeal to the Ephesians at his final departure from them that he was, *free from the blood of all men because he had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God*. The whole of revealed truth cannot indeed be preached in a single sermon – nor in a hundred sermons. But if a minister of the Gospel intentionally year after year passes over any part of the Gospel, he has not preached the gospel and especially if he omits any of the essential doctrines or precepts thereof he has probably helped more souls to perdition than to salvation and has injured more deeply the cause of religion than he could have done had he been an open champion for infidelity.

If then a minister of the Gospel would free himself from the blood of souls thus faithfully and particularly must he preach from the pulpit. And as the Israelites were commanded to bring oil olive that was beaten for light to cause the lamps in the tabernacle to burn continually - so should the preacher of the Gospel not bring before his people loose undigested discourses - but such as evince study and care. The great truths of religion are indeed so striking that even if presented in an obscene and repulsive manner they cannot be wholly inoperative. But if thrown into an inviting and elegant form and clothed with ancillary dress their effect will be tenfold greater. And many a man of taste and intelligence has been disgusted with religion itself because its principles were presented from the pulpit in so uncouth and homely a manner. It is true indeed that many hasty productions nay even mere *ex tempore* effusions are greatly admired and praised. But it is not always the sermon that pleases most during its delivery and concerning which most is said such a sermon is not generally of the most profitable kind. When a discourse carries conviction to the sinners conscience he will be too deeply occupied with his depravity and danger to dwell much upon the sermon. And hence it ought to be more gratifying to a gospel preacher to learn that his audience went away from public worship silent and solemn than to hear of their loud applauding of his performances. Now the more thoroughly a discourse is studied the more probability is there that such will be its effect. The object of this previous study is given the several parts of the sermon such a position that one shall enforce the other and that they shall all tend to the same point and to clear the arguments of all difficulty and objection so that they shall search the understanding without any counteracting influences. We all know that gold and silver separated from the ore are more bright and valuable. So divine truth if purified from the dross of human ignorance and speculation in the furnace of reflection will come forth more glorious and influential. And it is by no means an unimportant consideration that the preacher be particular about the style of his discourses. *A word fitly spoken, says Solomon, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.* And this will apply to the manner of a sermon. The religious truth it contains is the apple of gold and no art can make it any thing else than gold yet its appearance is more interesting if placed in the midst of a picture of silver - that is if it be surrounded with an elegant and energetic style. It is a finished remark of an eminent man who being asked whether it was not beneath the dignity of a Christian to pay attention to the graces of composition replied - *it is better to write so as to make a critic turn Christian than to write so as to make a Christian turn critic.* [George Campbell?]

But although the minister of Christ has proclaimed the truth of revelation from the pulpit ever so extensively and faithfully yet this is by no means all that is implied in preaching the Gospel. It must be preached by him in his ordinary intercourse with his people. Men may sit quietly under the most alarming ministrations of the pulpit because they continue to evade a personal application. And therefore it is necessary to endeavor to win them to Christ by a familiar interview. Show men indeed have a more happy talent at which may be called parlor preaching than others: but it is believed that all maybe be useful in this way. And if men select and support a minister of the gospel committing to him the most important of all interests the care of their souls, they surely ought not to object if the minister shrinking under the weight of responsibility that lies upon him should sometimes in a tender winning manner make enquiries concerning the state of their souls. And is it criminal in him if he exhort them personally to accept of Christ? Is it unpardonable if he wish to communicate instruction to their families and their children? Will they not also feel confidence enough in their pastor to communicate to him their doubts and difficulties and to solicit his assistance for their removal? We know indeed that such parochial interviews should be as little formal as possible and we know also that there are seasons peculiarly favorable and others peculiarly unfavorable for these personal addresses. But to neglect them wholly how can a minister of Christ wash his hands from the blood of his people and how can his people answer at last for their neglect of the means they enjoy?



But in vain does a man preach the Gospel in the pulpit and in the social circle unless he also preach it in his life. No matter how eloquently and ably he defends and enforces the doctrines of Christianity if there be not correspondent conduct - if the fruit of those doctrines be not displayed in his walk and conversation his words will fall upon the ears of his congregation like idle tales. They will perceive at once that he does not believe what he maintains and that notwithstanding his eloquence and zeal he carries within him an hypocritical heart. In the language of Paul will they address him, *Thou which teachest another teachest not thyself? Thou that preacheth a man should not steal dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law through breaking the law dishonoureth thou God?*

But there is not probably much need of proving that a minister of the Gospel should exemplify his faith by his works. For all men are ready enough to acknowledge and to demand this. And is it not often the fact that they place the standard of the holiness of a preacher of righteousness much above what may reasonably be expected of human nature in its disordered fallen state? Do not people sometimes look for a degree of perfection in their teachers which the history of the church will not warrant? For alas! To assume the clerical dress will not conquer a corrupt nature: and after all their efforts ministers are feeble and sinful like other men - we mean even the best of them. And hence it is that a people are often disappointed in the man whom they select to watch for their souls: because they estimate too highly his acquirements in the divine life and in the order of enthusiastic attachment forget that he is a *man subject to like passions as they are*.

To preach the word then in the pulpit - in the ordinary intercourse between minister and people and in his daily conduct is his grand duty - the business of his life. The apostle in the next place directs Timothy and every other preacher of the Gospel to be *instant in season out of season*. That is he must preach not only at stated times but must seek opportunities and improve them for enforcing the truths of religion - before many or few - among friends or enemies - in public and in private. Whatever would tend to render his instruction more forcible and influential he must endeavor to acquire - and whatever institutions are favourable to religion he must promote. And in this work he must be instant that is must be in earnest and unwearied. So far as health will permit *he must give himself wholly that his profiting may appear to all*. The work is indeed a great one - great enough to occupy an hundred hands through all the years of life. Let us just take a view of the work that lies before a clergyman in ordinary station in the church.

A part of this labor that cannot be dispensed with is the preparation of the discourses for the Sabbath. As that is the day especially intended for the conversion and sanctification of the world the preacher should make peculiar preparations for it. In this employment some are much more expeditious than others. Were my own experience required I should say that four days constant study are necessary for me to compose two sermons even in a decent style and manner. The fact is the standard of public taste in this country is rapidly rising and although it imposes a severe application upon public speeches yet they ought to rejoice at it and encourage that appetite which will not be full with husks but demand something more substantial and nourishing. A man may throw together in a short time many pious and correct observations - but to select for a sermon a single point - and to bring every argument and remark to bear upon this point - and at the same time not to fall short of or exceed the standard of God's word - to select the most appropriate passages from the scripture and to put the whole into such language as shall overwhelm by its energy and delight - by its smoothness - to do all this must be the work of time and close reflection. And yet after all perhaps a sermon thus written might in many instances excite the attention of an audience less than one thrown hastily and incoherently together.

But we believe the ultimate effect of preaching is not to be estimated by the immediate effect. And though a sermon closely knit together in all its parts and pruned of its redundancies and defects might exert a calmer influence upon the mind than one dictated by the feelings of the moment; yet we believe that in general it would sink deeper into the memory and into the understanding and into the conscience and remain written upon the heart long after the effervescence produced by the other had subsided and every trace of it was obliterated.

Another thing generally regarded in this country as a part of a minister's duty is the preaching of occasional lectures. In seasons of peculiar attention to religion this is most certainly necessary and an imperious duty. And at other times if the preacher has health and leisure and a part of his people are necessarily detained from public ordinances the practice is a good one: but in our opinion there is some danger that in time of great trepidity in religion this course will encourage the neglect of the public worship of God in his sanctuary: and therefore we conceive the preaching are not preaching of these lectures should be left to the discretion of the pastor of the flock - according as he has time and help and perceives a necessity for the effort. And in regard to the practice of giving sermons on funeral occasions we believe it to be an unreasonable requirement - and one with which the gospel minister cannot in general comply consistently with the faithful performance of his other duties. Not but that cases may sometimes occur where it would be proper: but in general we conceive it to be better to make the application of such providences on the succeeding Sabbath and this is the course which in the present state of my health I feel constrained to follow.

But in the preparation of so many discourses how shall the preacher avoid a tedious repetition? Repetition is indeed necessary in order to reach the hearts of those who love the world more than they love God: but too much of it should be avoided. Says Christ, *every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.* Now the fact is that the stock of almost every man's ideas if not replenished will soon become exhausted and then although he may bring forth things old he cannot produce things new. It is necessary therefore for him to collect new information by reading. The study of the Scriptures should engage his first attention and he should strive to become master of the whole science of theology and ethics. But if he do not devote some time also to other departments of knowledge there is danger that his mind will become bigoted and contracted. Indeed it is no matter how extensive the knowledge of a clergyman provided he can obtain it without interfering with other duties for the greater his information the greater may be his usefulness. Ignorance has been the matter of most of the fanaticism and corruption of the church since the beginning: and thanks to God the day has gone by when learning is regarded as an enemy to Christianity and a dangerous qualification in a gospel minister nay it is now required in such an one - and we rejoice that these requirements are yearly increasing and that religion and learning are once more united after having been so long so unnaturally separated.

On the principle that knowledge is eminently friendly to religion it becomes the duty of a gospel minister to encourage its diffusion among his people by schools - by libraries and other methods prudence and wisdom may dictate. He ought not to be deterred from this by the probability that many of his people will outstrip him in intellectual pursuits and thus become uncomfortable critics upon his performances: for if such should be the case it will serve to rouse him to greater exertion and prevent him from sinking into a state of apathy concerning literature and science. Indeed except the interests of religion none should lie nearer his heart than those of knowledge. For the direct tendency of this is to render people better men and better Christians.

Have we not already exhibited duties enough and more than enough to occupy the whole time of the

minister of the Gospel? Several days devoted to preparation for the pulpit and of the remainder a part occupied in improving and strengthening the mind by studying and occasional lectures funerals and in advancing the interest of learning to say nothing of the relaxation and exercise necessary to the health of all men - these various duties it would seem might fill up the week. And yet another important requirement remains to be mentioned viz. parochial visits. These ought not to be neglected and therefore in the first place such visits should be short. Suppose a parish to contain two hundred families. Should the pastor of such a place with the little time he has to spare indulge in protracted visits scarcely would he be able during the course of his ministry even if of a medium duration to become acquainted with those committed to his charge. And besides it does not require but a short time to effect the objects of a ministerial visit. To enquire for one another's welfare - to ascertain the probable conditions of a man or a family toward God and to leave a word of exhortation or consolation - this is a business that may be terminated in a short period and in ordinary cases there is not much beyond this that is profitable.

Another ingredient in parochial visits is that they should not be formal. The Gospel minister does not go to the habitations of his people that he may be served with luxurious living and fare sumptuously. It is not his wish that they should waste their time and property in pampering his appetite. He visits them expecting to find them engaged in their ordinary pursuits. And much more pleasant to him is it to hear them express a cordial welcome than to listen to a train of excuses for what needs none. A people ought to have confidence enough in their pastor to believe that he does not visit them with a view to make criticisms upon their appearance but to benefit their souls - and if these be found in health more reviving is it to his Spirit than all the feasting of Dives.

Thus you have a summary of the more arduous and weekly returning duties of a minister among his people. Many incidental engagements besides those named above might be added to this list: but we pass them by at this time and we shall omit also to remark on the concluding part of the text - *reproach, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrines*, first because these particulars would give scope for another sermon and secondly because we wish at this time rather to recapitulate the duties of the minister than to attempt an explanation of the manner in which they should be performed.

And now in conclusion of this discourse we would remark we have not given this summary of a faithful minister's duties because we wished to magnify their number and their difficulty and therein find an excuse for neglecting them: but our object has been in the first place to show what in our opinion is the standard of ministerial service to which every one placed in the sacred office should aim. Few of us indeed can ever reach it. The duties are so multitudinous and arduous - our zeal is so far below what it should be - our bodily constitutions are often so debilitated and our sins are so manifold that we are too apt to rest in a very imperfect performance. Even the indefatigable Paul in view of the magnitude of his labors was forced to exclaim, *who is sufficient for these things?* And ten thousand have been the voices that have been repeated the enquiry with a desponding emphasis. Notwithstanding it is well that the standard is so high for were it lowered we should probably sink proportionably in our exertions.

The second object of this discourse is to show how liable people are to be disappointed by forming too high expectations of the services of their minister. When they look at detached parts of these services they appear to require but little exertion for their performance and hence will a people be very likely to conclude him capable of a greater multiplicity of duties than it is in his power be he ever so faithful to perform. But if they will only take a general view of ministerial labors - in a study in his pulpit and among his people the view will tend to moderate their expectations and thus prevent the mutual mortification of a disappointment.

The third object of this discourse is to show how necessary it is for people to give to their pastor their support and assistance. We speak not here of that support which ministers to his temporal necessities but of that which enables him the more acceptably to God to feed them with the bread of eternal life.

And first the minister needs the cooperation of his people. If they resist every plan for improvement - if they feel no interest in the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom he will find this resistance and indifference hanging like the deadweight upon his exertions - and he will probably soon sink in the unequal conflict. But if they lend their assistance and strive to second everything that will promote God's glory and really desire a revival of vital godliness then will the empire of darkness tremble before the united exertion.

Secondly the minister needs the counsel of his people. *In the multitude of counselors there is safety.* And an individual will surely go forward with firmer confidence with in the prosecution of any benevolent enterprise if the pious and well-informed among his people coincide with him in judgment - and if they dissent from him perhaps he may thereby be induced to abandon many an effort that would prove abortive.

Thirdly the minister must have the prayers of his people. Paul felt himself better qualified for the work of the ministry upon the occasion of every new convert to Christianity because he knew that another righteous man would offer up fervent effectual prayer for his success. The hands of the minister like the hands of Moses in the battle between Israel and Amalek will often become heavy - and the intercessions of his people can alone support them. While thus sustained Israel will prevail: but if these prayers cease his hands will fail and Amalek - yea a worse than Amalek - will triumph.

Delivered

At Conway June 1821

## Sermon 52 A Glance at the Future

[Sermon No. 52, "A Glance at the Future," Genesis 49:1, 1821 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 8]

Genesis 49:1

*Gather yourselves together that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.*

*[This was Hitchcock's first sermon after installation as pastor of the Conway church. It contains interesting comments on the relationship between pastor and parish and the duties of a minister of God. Also see Sermon 51 delivered that afternoon.]*

There is not a stronger passion in the heart of man than the desire of penetrating into futurity and learning his own destinies. And it must have afforded a high gratification to the Jew that he could resort to the prophet and hear from his lips as from the mouth of God a development of the events that would afterwards come to pass. There was it is true in some instances an obscurity resting upon their predictions until they were actually accomplished - but this uncertainty served only to awaken to a more lively exercise the imagination and give an additional interest to the prophecy.

Of this kind was the prediction of Jacob to his twelve sons. This venerable patriarch over whose head nearly a century and an half of eventful years had passed had now laid himself down to die. And he called unto his sons and said, *gather yourselves together that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together and hear ye sons of Jacob and hearken unto Israel your Father.* He then proceeded in the figurative language of prophecy to unfold the *fortunes of his twelve sons to the end of time and then gathering up his feet into the bed he yielded up the Ghost and was gathered unto his people.*

Most of the predictions of Jacob concerning his sons have already been fulfilled and we can bear testimony that he spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. It was not therefore presumption in him to lay claim to the Spirit of prophecy and to declare the destinies of his sons to the latest generation with unhesitating assurance. But at this age of the world where is the man on whom the mantle of prophecy has fallen? Who is there that can establish his claim to such an influence of the Holy Spirit as amounts to inspiration? Long is it since the vision and the prophecy have been sealed and who art thou that presumest to say to the people, *gather yourselves together that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days?* What propriety then is there selecting such a passage for a text?

We lay no claims my hearers to any degree of inspiration. We confess that futurity is as impenetrable to us as to you. Still however there are certain general probabilities in human events whereby we may judge with some degree of assurance what will be from what is passed. *The thing that hath been says Solomon is that what shall be: and that which is done is that what shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.* Hence there may we conclude that there is a certain analogy running through the natural and moral world and that every event is so connected with and dependant upon preceding events that it might with certainty be foretold by a mind that could understand and examine every link of the vast chain of the Divine government. Now we suppose that none but the divine mind care and have taken such a comprehensive view and therefore none but Jehovah can with absolute certainty

predict anything future. Yet created minds - even the mind of man can discern a few of the links of the connecting chain of the universe and therefore man uninspired is able to discern a little way and with an obvious vision into futurity so that he can calculate with a good degree of probability upon many of the occurrences of the time to come. Indeed we all of us act almost daily upon this semi-prophetic principle. The husbandman when he sows the ground - the merchant when he advertises his property abroad - the operator when he lays his gainful plans and risks his all at the outset - the scholar when he submits to the painful drudgery of a rudimental education - and all of us indeed when we make any provision for the future for mind or body - rely confidently on this insight into futurity. And though from the causes already named everyone of us and everyone of our plans is liable to be disappointed yet in the majority of instances these plans either wholly or partially succeed and therefore it is that we are willing to act on the principle.

But in addition to this kind of insight into futurity which may be called natural prophecy men are able to either from experience or revelation to foretell some grand and important events with absolute certainty. Experience teaches them that they must all endure pain - that all must submit to death - and therefore that every connection on earth must be dissolved. Experience however stops at the grave: but revelation has fixed beyond this on the ocean of eternity one prominent mark which every eye can see. It is the day of judgment. And though on every side of the final tribunal there is a darkness impenetrable to mortal vision yet this is declared by the God of unerring truth to be unmovably fixed and all the inspired men of old unitedly point man to the day of judgment and the throne of judgment.

It being the fact then that some future events are probable and others certain to man - the preacher of truth at the present day may with propriety address his people with the words of our text with the alteration of a single word - *Gather yourself together that I may tell you that which may befall you in the last days*. And since many of these events which either analogy renders probable or experience or revelation finds are highly momentous and important to us all and since a steady contemplation of them tends to prepare us to meet them it may be profitable on some occasions to direct our eyes forward to the scenes through which we may or must pass.

The events of the past week my brethren remind us that we have entered into a relation to one another whose solemnity and interest and consequences the records of eternity can alone develop. And now standing on the threshold of so momentous and responsible an office you will permit me to pause for a few moments and casting an eye along the stream of time and viewing ourselves as minister and people carried down this stream you will indulge me in endeavoring to point out some of the scenes through which we may pass and some of the scenes through which we must pass.

First what are the scenes that may be before us? I do not wish to awaken any unnecessary fears - nor look with a melancholy foreboding upon the future. I would not wish to distrust the power or faithfulness of God. But we know that in this chequered state of existence changes and trials are eminently essential to our spiritual health and therefore it is that God often suffers the fairest prospects to be darkened and destroyed even while we are yet gazing upon them with the enthusiasm of novelty. Hence then it may be that the present harmony and peace that exist among us may be speedily succeeded by division and contentions.

Union my hearers is the work of God - division is the work of Satan. If the Holy Spirit be poured out upon the hearts of men, inclining them, *to follow the things that make for peace no root of bitterness springing up will be allowed to trouble them*. Every apprehended difficulty will vanish and there will exist a mutual disposition and effort to make every concession necessary to harmony. But if the Spirit of God

be grieved to depart from the people the prince of darkness whose governing principle is *divide and conquer* will set at work all his engines of falsehood malice and evil speaking and soon will the *Father be divided against the son and the son against the Father; the mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law and the daughter in law against the mother in law.*

What then are the means by which the influence of God's Spirit can be continued to a people that are necessary to secure them six from the assaults of the great enemy of all peace and harmony? The prayers of Christians we reply is amply the great medium through which cometh down every good gift and every perfect gift. If these prayers be withheld if the professed children of God forget their dependance upon him they do in fact pray *to the Prince of the power of the air* and invite his cooperation.

And do you my brethren feel assured that you shall never relax in your humble prayers for the peace of Zion in this place? Remember that it is possible even for real Christians when they find unanimity and success to attend their every effort to impute their prosperity to their own unaided energies and to say, *by the strength of my hand have I done it and by my wisdom; for I am prudent.* There is such a thing as a believer forgetting to pray for the continuance of peace when he is in possession of it and can discern no signs of any approaching storm. And then it is that Satan is most active. It was while the husbandman slept that the enemy sowed tares among his wheat. Now is there not a deep slumber upon the eyes of the Christians when he no longer prays? And will not the great adversary seize upon such a moment to cast into the human heart the seeds of discord?

Christian brethren although you may have prayed much and fervently for this peace of our Zion and for the union of our hearts yet it would be no new thing under the sun were a spiritual sleep to come upon your souls and before you are aware of it the roots of bitterness be so firmly and thickly planted among you that every plant of peace and love will be eradicated. If this deep slumber should in judgment fail upon you already do I see the heart of Christian steeled against Christian - brother against brother and neighbor against neighbor. I see the hand that should be raised unitedly in prayer lifted up for shameful strife - I hear those voices that now unite in hallelujahs to God venting forth mutual execrations secretions and blasphemies and loading the air with reproach and poisonous calumny. I see the Spirit of God Weening wearied out with so much perverseness withdrawing his influences from this people and leaving them to the iron dominion of the Prince of darkness. God in mercy grant that this may prove a false vision and I a false prophet!

Another evil that may come upon the people is my own unfaithfulness. What if the fear of man should prove a snare to me and I should therefore neglect an exhibition of the grand fundamentals of the Gospel and the sins that most easily beset you? What if I should stop short of a full development of the truth and continually prophecy smooth things? Or what of through the withdrawal of the Spirit I should be left to make shipwrecks of the faith and to disgrace the cause of truth by an unholy life? All these things have happened to men and may happen to me. Nay if they have not already come upon me it is imputable merely to the preventing grace of God. For my sins richly deserve such an abandonment. And what security have I that in time to come this will not be the case? Do I depend upon the sincerity or firmness of my heart? A heart that is *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked* - a heart whose sin and treacheries in the sight of God are more than can be numbered? No brethren there is no security that I shall not with a multitude of others become unfaithful and apostate. And should such be the case it needs but little of the spirit of prophecy to foretell that I shall drag down some of you with myself to the bottomless pit. O what a picture of ingratitude is this! That the man whose temporal wants are

supplied by the generosity of a people and who look to him to guide them to heaven should with a cruel indifference conduct them to the very brink of eternal misery! And yet however mortifying the thought there is doubtless depravity enough in this heart to urge to such an abomination if the grace of God do not check its tendencies. And the picture just exhibited may be but a prophetic delineation of my future apostasy and of your misery. Your earnest prayers therefore are once more entreated to save me and yourselves from such a catastrophe.

Another gloomy vision of futurity presents itself to my imagination as prophetic of what my hearers my one day witness. I see this church having denied the faith once delivered to the saints and the *Lord that bought them possessing indeed the form of godliness but denying the power itself*. I see them a body without a soul - no longer signalized by faithful prayer or holiness - no longer separated from the world by anything but a name - the receptacle of all contradictory opinions and charitable to each other's errors in doctrine and defects in practice because mutually criminal - in short a church whose bond of union is scepticism and whose end is to be burned. I see you my brethren no longer able to bear the truth - no longer decisions of that preaching which searches and tries the heart but determined that the cry of peace shall be perpetually sounded in your ears and that the minister shall blind the eyes of the people and the people those of the minister till both stumble on the dark mountains.

Do you repel my brethren the idea that such may hereafter be your state? O have you forgotten Ephesus and Smyrna and Pergamum and Thyatira and Philadelphia and Laodicea where once the church of God was pure in faith and pure in practice? Yet it has pleased God to remove these candlesticks from their places and the darkness of idolatry and superstition has succeeded. Think nothing that you are secure against the flood of error and corruption. Do you feel that you are undermining such a grievous chastisement? Alas where is the church not deserving it? In heaven only is it to be found. Watch therefore brethren unto prayer and repent and do the first works lest your candlestick be removed out of its place.

But these dark scenes have passed from my imagination and a brighter vision visits my mind. Is it fancy or do I really see this church rising in the strength of the Most High, *her light being come and the glory of the Lord being risen upon her*? Do I not see her members with one heart and one mine compassing the altar of the Lord of Hosts and pouring out the fervent effectual prayers for that Holy Spirit to be given them who can alone open the blind eyes and unstop the death ears? Does there not sound a voice in my ears, *So the sinners in Zion are afraid - fearfulness hath surprised hypocrites*? Do I not see the house of God filled with an anxious and a weeping multitude hungering and thirsting for the bread of eternal life? Is it fancy or do I hear in this habitation a convicted soul crying out, *what shall I do to be saved?* and in another dwelling the soul that has cast itself upon the Lord triumphing in redeeming love? O I will believe it is not fancy that now presents to my mind many of the congregation before me coming forward to take the vow of the Lord upon them and to confess before men the Redeemer of their souls - yes it must be real - it cannot be that all these youth and all these middle age and all these of riper years who have hitherto lived without hope - it cannot be that all these will be finally lost. No though I prove a false prophet I cannot avoid predicting that we shall be blessed with revival of religion. O Lord fulfill this prediction and we will show *grace grace unto it*.

We proceed to develop some of those scenes through which we must pass. Of these we shall select only two. And the first of these is the scene of death. We know not indeed in what place or in what hour that grim messenger will meet us. And it is possible that none of you will witness my exit and I that I shall witness none of yours. Perhaps it will please God to call me home the first and to dissolve the connection that now exists between us in its very outset. But should my life be lengthened out and



should no unforeseen blow cut asunder the pastoral relation it will probably be my painful duty to visit many of you on the bed of death and their endeavor to administer the law of consolations the consolations of religion. And O my hearers how it will in that hour mitigate the pain of a final separation if I can see the countenance of death spread over with the calmness of resignation and the soul reposing on the righteousness of Christ meeting composedly the king of terrors! And it may be my lot to hear some of you in that hour of untold agony and fearful emotion having obtained the conquest over every fear and already permitted to see heaven open - there perhaps shall I hear your voice gathering a more than earthly energy breaking forth in the conquerors song, *O death where is thy sting O grave where is thy victory! Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

But alas I may be called to to the dying bed of some who now hear me only to witness the agony and despair of a soul forsaken of God on the very limit of existence and shrinking from the dark world into which he is about to enter to spend eternity. Oh in that hour what consolation must we give you - what ray of hope can we turn in upon your sinking soul? We can weep with you and we can pray with you – *but who can forgive sins but God only?* Even in that hour we must be faithful and shrink not from exhibiting to you your lost condition by nature and the necessity of being born again - of repentance and faith and holiness. And in that hour when it occurs to you have resisted the loudest warnings all your life feeble will be the consolation of saying that it is merely possible that God may yet have mercy on you. Oh, in despite of your prayers and tears most probably must we see you in the agonies of death turning us the eye of despair and sinking at once into the invisible world bearing no hope and no evidence that you are gone to a better world but on the contrary evincing by the delirious and distress of your last moments that your eternal misery has commenced even on this side of the tomb.

The last scene that awaits us my hearers and awaits us all and it awaits us infallibly is the final judgment. Whether the pastoral relation between us be long or short - whether we be united or undivided - whether we remain steadfast in the faith and practice of the Gospel or apostatize - whether the Gospel I preached to you be received or rejected one thing is certain that we must together realize the scenes of the final judgment. We shall not attempt to paint before you the terrors and solemnities of that day - the burning universe - the opening graves - the shout of the archangel - the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory - the tribunal of God rising on the ruins of the world - God himself ascending the judgment seat - the book of life opening wherein is registered the character and the fate of every individual - the universe of beings crowding with trembling solicitude around their Judge - nor the joy on the one side or the agony painted in the countenances of those on the other side as this Judge separates the righteous from the wicked. In vain should we attempt any adequate description of such solemnities as these. But there is one fact on this subject which we can comprehend. In the midst of all the sublimities and terrors and confusion of that day must we be brought face to face and in the presence of God and angels and men shall I be asked what were my motives in taking oversight of this church and people and you will be asked what were your motives in inviting me to the charge. And should the union continue another solemn question will be urged upon us and I shall be asked what I have preached and how I've preached and you will be asked how you have received and how you have improved that preaching.

Delivered

At Conway June 1821

## Sermon 53 Proper Mode of Exhibiting Divine Truth

[Sermon No. 53, "Proper Mode of Exhibiting Divine Truth," Ephesians 4:15, 1821 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 8]

Ephesians 4:15

*Speaking the truth in love.*

*[Interesting comments on how to preach including a warning against too many threatenings.]*

This exhortation is addressed to all believers: but it is peculiarly applicable to the minister of the Gospel and we shall proceed in discoursing from these words to consider what manner of preaching the Gospel is most promotive of the glory of God and the salvation of men. For the truth of religion may be declared in the pulpit in so uncouth disgusting or irritating a mode that even if immersed with error they will lose their proper influence and serve to harden men in sin. It is therefore of no small importance that correct views be entertained manner as well as a matter of preaching. And we shall remark, First upon certain modes of exhibiting the truths of religion that are improper; and Secondly upon those modes best calculated to win souls to Christ.

In introducing the first head of the discourse it may be remarked that in accordance with the text the grand principle that ought to inspire every minister of Christ in his public discourses is love - love to God and man. If he speak the truth in love - with this principle urging him onwards - he can scarcely fail of preaching properly and acceptably to his conscience and his God. And therefore if any other feeling than love governs his mind in the composition of his sermons his manner will be improper.

The first thing that will render if so is a partial or unequal exhibition of the truth. Some men perhaps in the course of a long ministry never bring into the pulpit any but certain favorite doctrines or precepts. Some insist chiefly on the moral duties - others upon the duties of piety - others upon the threatenings of the bible - others upon the promises and consolations and others upon the doctrines. Some feed their flocks with strong meat continually without milk - others administer milk without meat. In all such cases there is if I may so speak an unwarrantable favoritism - a giving to some parts of revelation an undue importance and a detraction from the rest. But where is the authority for exalting one part of revelation above another? *All Scripture*, says Paul, *is profitable for doctrine for reproof for conduct for correction for instruction in righteousness*. Hence then the preacher of the Gospel is bound to adopt this plain rule - *to give to every subject that space and importance that are given to it in the bible*. In that volume the various doctrines duties threatenings promises and precepts are arranged and proportioned by an Omniscient God and let not man presume to be wise about which is written. It is difficult indeed if not impossible to follow this rule in every case: for there may be instances in which a minister should press more forcibly particular parts of inspiration than others or attack particular vices. But a general conformity to the rule may be expected to meet with a divine blessing. At any rate he cannot expect that blessing upon the labors of him through a long course of years intentionally omits any part of Scripture truth - nor upon him who touches so seldom upon many of the fundamentals of religion that his people look upon them as of no consequence - nor upon him who brings forward only those subjects that are popular and continually prophesize smooth things. Says the Lord to Ezekiel, *stand in*

*the court of the Lord's house and speak words to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the Lord's house all the words that I command thee to speak unto them- diminish not a word.* And we know not that any reason can be given why this command is not applicable to every minister of the Gospel.

Another method of preaching the Gospel that is improper is the giving to the truths of religion a controversial form. What doctrine of the Christian system has not been disputed? Nay is not now disputed in some region of the earth? If we except perhaps the being of a God we know of none. But this is no reason for exhibiting to an audience the great fundamentals of Christianity as if they were matters of doubtful disputation. What though a man should endeavor formally to prove (as some have attempted to prove) that nothing of material nature exists except in imagination? Would it therefore be necessary for a public teacher to come forward gravely and attempt by a lengthy argument to show that the sun does actually shine that what appears to us as a tree or a rock or a mountain is actually such? thus conveying to the minds of his hearers that it is indeed a doubtful point whether the sun really shines or a tree or rock or mountains actually exist. So in regard to the essential doctrines of Christianity a minister ought not to exhibit them as doubtful by holding them up in a controversial aspect. For a great part of the objections made to them in the world are just idle and just as ridiculous as objections against material existence and therefore do not need any formal refutation. We speak here only of such as acknowledgment the authority of the bible. And however sceptical even these maybe we believe their consciences bear witness stronger than a host of arguments to the reality the reasonableness and the power of the doctrines of the cross. In the pride of philosophical speculation they may endeavor to show that certain truths are not taught in the bible and they may even array a multitude of ingenious emendations and alterations and arguments to overturn these truths and perhaps exult over their downfall. But still in the returning hour of serious reflection the voice of conscience will again be lifted up and bear testimony to these very truths. There are seasons when the vainest Gospel sceptics on earth will feel that men are lost sinners in the sight of God - that they must be born again to prepare for heaven - that their own goodness cannot justify them before God and that therefore their salvation must be wholly of grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus. The preacher of righteousness therefore may address the truths of the Gospel to the consciences of men with an assurance that this infallible monitor will add her voice to the voice of revelation. And if men resist the truth they resist also conscience. Hence then it is not wise nor is it doing justice to Christianity to search the records of the church for all the strange opinions of eccentric man and all the fanciful objections of scepticism that these may be held up to the contemplation of an audience. And we know not a more needless waste of time and talents than for a minister of the Gospel to spend that hour which should be devoted to winning his hearers to Christ in doing away objections to divine truth and in refuting heresies which till his sermon were sleeping in forgetfulness and would never have been heard of by his audience had not his zeal dragged them forth from their graves.

But what if there be existing controversies concerning the essential doctrines of the Gospel in the region where the lot is cast. Shall he exclude these from his pulpit and leave his people to be led away from the simplicity there is in Christ? It is an excellent remark of a wise man that the best way to refute error is to establish the truth. Let therefore the minister of Christ preach Christ and him crucified. Let him enforce all the grand doctrines dependant on the cross - and he will be thus most likely to secure his people from delusion and error. But if even in the case supposed he bring forward the truth of the bible in dress and with the aim of controversy - if he seem to be aiming his shafts against an adversary he will infallibly urge his people to espouse different sides - while the skepticks and the weak minded looking at the surface of the subject will be satisfied that there is nothing permanent and real in religion.

In the third place it is improper to preach the Gospel in a disgusting or imitating mode.

There is such a thing as man's being disgusted and irritated with the truth alone. Indeed how can it be otherwise than offensive to a man of graceful morality and self exalted feelings to be told of the utter Alienation of his heart from God and of the mighty revolution that must be undergone even by him ever he can be in favour with God - and that until this radical change be wrought upon him *he is a child of wrath even as others*. But this disgust and imitation which results from the naked truth and which the faithful minister will often find excited - this is not the disgust and imitation which we now mean. We refer to a certain offensive manner whereby the natural opposition of men to the truth is increased. This mode of preaching derives its chief odiousness from the use of certain strong human terms that have become unpalatable from an exaggerated meaning that has been fastened upon them. Now if these words and phrases are of human invention we see no reason for being very tenacious in using them if by their omission we can give an equally good view of any doctrine and thereby remove some of the deepest prejudice of the heart.

Again Gospel truth may be rendered disgusting by making too much use of the engine of fear in its exhibition - by holding up the threatenings of God's law so frequently and so prominently that they lose their proper influence and beget in the hearers an impression that the preacher is endeavoring not to draw them but drive them to Christ - not to attach them to holiness by its beauty and loveliness but to keep them in awe and subjection by its terrors. Now though the threatenings of God's law should often be held over the heads of the unregenerate yet some other engine must be brought to bear upon their hearts before they will love him and if they hear little else from our lips but terrors they will soon learn not to fear but to nauseate more strongly than ever the whole plan of Gospel truth. It is therefore the duty and the wisdom of the preacher of righteousness to give to the threatenings of the bible that place only in their ministrations which Christ and the Apostles gave to them.

We have shown in what manner the Gospel is not to be preached. Let us in the second place endeavor to trace in what manner it should be preached.

And first it should be preached plainly.

*If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, says Paul, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise you except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air. If I know not the meaning of the voice I shall be unto him that speak a barbarian and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. I had rather speak five words with my understanding that by my voice I might teach others also than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.*

But we scarcely need the pen of inspiration to inform us that plainness and precision are absolutely essential in the exhibition of divine truth. We know it to be something more than useless for a watchman on the walls of Zion to frame his public interactions in a language of style or idiom which his flock are not able to understand. Whether the obscurity lie in the selection of unusual and ambiguous words - or in their improper position - or in metaphysical disquisition it alike retards the progress of truth. Some subjects may indeed require a metaphysical mode of discussion - but to present every part of divine truth in such a dress as to render obscure what before was very plain. A discourse fitted up in this manner will have the appearance of research and learning but ordinary minds will go away from hearing as unsatisfied and hungry for the bread of eternal life as they came: and for the plain reason that they did not comprehend the sermon. It is an accurate remark by a distinguished man that *had the province of common sense never been invaded by the subtleties of scholastic argument there might have*

*been no use for the science of metaphysics.* But when an acute metaphysician appears to darken the suggestions of this universal and infallible guide he must be fought with his own weapons and another metaphysician must rise to meet and to overmatch him. Thus he - it would appear then that unless a man were called to preach to an audience of metaphysicians he cannot be justified in adopting the metaphysical mode of sermonizing. Since such a mode is unnecessary - useless - nay is injurious.

There is also a mode of preaching adopted sometimes the opposite to plainness but which it is no easy matter to describe. It consists generally of a certain ambiguity of expression whereby men of very different sentiments and religions suppose the preacher to be of their respective tenets. This mode although it may render a man popular for time is apt to produce at length a suspicion among his people that he is a time server destitute of fixed principles and indifferent about the opinions of those he is appointed to guide to heaven. It is therefore better in the end even in a worldly view for the minister of the Gospel to declare and define his sentiments in the plainest possible manner. And especially in this frankness and discrimination important when the man looks forward to that great day in which before the universe he must give an account of the matter and manner of his preaching. And we are inclined to believe that even those who object to the particular doctrinal sentiments of a man will notwithstanding have a better opinion of him if he sincerely and plainly and without personalities avow and defend his opinions than if he should endeavor to conceal them and use such an ambiguous language as could have no definite meaning affixed to it. And indeed we do not see how it can possibly be a reasonable cause of offence for man honestly and fairly to maintain those doctrines which after much prayer and research he sincerely believes to be found in the Scriptures and to be essential to salvation.

The second ingredient in the manner of preaching the Gospel is that it be preached boldly.

It is said of Paul that, *he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and that he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months disputing and dissuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.* And this fearless manner of preaching did God bless. For it is said of Paul and Barnabas that, *long time there abode they (in Ionium) speaking boldly in the Lord which gave testimony unto the word of his grace and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.* Paul also directs the Ephesians, *to pray always with all prayer that he might speak boldly, as he ought to speak.* And there is not on record a more independent awakening address to the consciences of men than is to be found in the exhortations and reproofs of Our Saviour - *With these preachers then was no fear of man that bringeth a snare.* And then and there was with them a faithfulness to God and to the souls of their fellow man well worthy of imitation. And what powerful motives urge every preacher of the Gospel to the like boldness and faithfulness! By his timidity by omitting fully to develop the truth he may be the means of conducting some one of his hearers to everlasting perdition and by rigid faithfulness perhaps he may awaken some conscience lead in trespasses and sins to the possession of light, peace, and joy and eternal glory. And let him look forward to that day when he will be confronted before his audience as the bar of God when his unfaithfulness will be blazing forth in sight of the universe without any concealment evasion or palliation.

In the third place the Gospel should be preached earnestly.

What! Can a man be animated in discoursing upon the things of time and be unanimated when he is developing the joys and glories of eternity? Can he be earnest and urgent in striving to deliver his neighbor from temporal evil and shall he be stupid when endeavoring to shield him from everlasting burnings? Let the ambassador of Christ as he ascends the pulpit look around upon his audience and what does he see! every one of them in danger of sinking into everlasting perdition. What every one?

Yes – the Christian in danger because he lives no more conformably to the Gospel - the sinner in danger on the very brink of ruin because he has never taken one steps toward a reconciliation with God. And perhaps the everlasting fate of his whole audience depends upon that single sermon the minister is about to deliver - and that fate may be happy if he appears in earnest but miserable if he seems insensible to his subject.

The themes discussed in the pulpit too are great enough one would think to drive away from the speaker all dullness and lightness of manner. That nature of God and of the Redeemer - the depravity and the condemnation of men - the glorious yet mysterious plan of redemption for their restoration - the value of the soul - the judgment of heaven and hell - these are the some subjects entering into the elements of the preachers discourses. And can be unmoved - can he be insensible to their deep solemnity - and with such sublimities and responsibilities before him can he be satisfied with unimpressive or theatrical or ludicrous exhibition of the Gospel!

*He that negotiates between God and man  
As God's ambassador, the great concerns  
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware  
Of lightness in his speech. Tis pitiful  
To court a gain, when you should win a soul  
To break a jest, when pity would inspire  
Pathetic exhortation; and to address  
The skittish fancy with facetious tales,  
When sent with God's commissions to the heart. [Cowper]*

In the fourth place the Gospel should be preached experimentally.

We mean by this that the man who preaches it should be one who has felt the power of religion on his own heart. And he must in experimental piety make his experience the groundwork of his sermons. For though there be ten thousand minor diversities between different Christians yet there are certain grand and substantial processes of feeling and sentiment in which they agree. But as far as these essentials are concerned may he preach experimentally. He must however by no means make his own experiences the infallible standard for others in every respect. So far as the depravity of the heart and the reality of regeneration are concerned he may follow his own remembrance and feelings: but as to the intensity with which this depravity is experienced and as to the manner in which this regeneration takes place he must not make his own heart a criterion. And so in regard to spiritual joys he must not deny that others feel them more because his joys are few and feeble.

In the last place the Gospel must be preached affectionately.

Who is this weeping over apostate and bloodthirsty Jerusalem? It is the great preacher of righteousness Christ? Who is this wishing himself accused for his brethren? It is the great Apostle of the Gentiles. And though he preached the Gospel plainly and boldly and earnestly and experimentally yet he also preached affectionately. He felt most deeply for those whom he saw wandering in the broad road to eternal misery. He did not warn them because he wished to display his authority or acquire dominion over them: but because he felt for them the yearnings of a compassion too strong to be resisted. Though he spoke the truth undisguisedly yet he spoke it in love. And thus speaks and thus feels every genuine minister of Christ. Even when compelled to hold before his people their sins and their danger he does it with a solemn tenderness and with an anxious wish to rescue them from the everlasting pit.

Such my hearers are the principal ingredients that should be found in the preaching of the Gospel. And if it be done plainly and boldly and earnestly and experimentally and affectionately we may hope for a demonstration of the Spirit and of power to accompany it. It will prove the hour of God and the wisdom of God to the salvation of many who hear it. God grant that each one of us who have taken it upon us to preach the everlasting gospel may thus proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus that we may not labor in vain nor spend our strength for naught - but be instrumental in bringing many sons and daughters unto glory. Amen.

Delivered

At Conway June 1821

## Sermon 56 Examples of the Saints

[Sermon No. 56, "Example of the Saints," Hebrews 6:12, 1821 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 8]

Hebrews 6: 12

*Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

*[Includes a discussion of a parishioner who has recently died.]*

The apostle in this text used the present time - that is he speaks of certain Christians who through faith and patience now inherit the promises. And hence may we infer that all departed believers in Christ enter immediately upon a state of enjoyment. Paul does not say who will inherit the promises but are are now inheriting the promises. While he was writing Abraham Moses Joshua Job and all others who while on earth had lived by faith were there in the presence of God, *where is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore*. They were not doomed to lie in a state of insensibility until the day of final judgment: but the moment they were loosened from the fetters of mortality their Spirits ascended to God who gave them there to unite in the song of the redeemed. The day of judgment will indeed manifest them righteous characters to the universe and then too will they be endued with Spiritual bodies but we have no evidence that their happiness will then be augmented. Already do they see as they are seen and know as they are known and the Lamb *feeds them and leads them to living fountains of water*.

The history of many of these glorified believers is on record - and though dead they yet speak in their example. It is this example of which Paul exhorts the Hebrews and through them all the family on earth name by the name of Christ to be imitators. When Christians are called to tread in the footsteps of Christ we believe a comparison of his sinless and divine nature with their corrupt and earthly hearts often produces in them so deep an impression of the difficulty of the effort that they shrink from it and despair of ever living like him who knew no sin. But here are men presented before them for imitation subject to like passions as they are - who had the same corrupt native dispositions to struggle against - and who nevertheless with less of light in the mysteries of the cross were enabled to come off more than conquerors. Here then are examples set before the believers of every generation which ought not to seem above his imitation and he is without excuse if he do not at least endeavor to live as they lived and to die as they died.

But who are the men whose sentiments and practices we are exhorted to follow? You have heard of Abel, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Joseph, of Moses - and time would fail us as it did the Apostle to tell of Barak and of Samson and of Jephthah of David also and Samuel out of the prophets. Nor should the apostles evangelist and martyrs of the Gospel dispensation be forgotten. Nay because they at least lived and believed and acted under the same dispensation we enjoy the example of Paul and Peter and John and James and Matthew and Mark and Luke and Stephen and a host of contemporaries is in peculiar propriety for our attempted imitation. And since the days of these pioneers of Christianity the history of the church disgusting and bloody as it is presents many a noble instance of Christian fortitude and triumph. Amid all the corruption of the faith - the delirium of fanaticism - the fury of contending sects and the massacres of intolerance - amid all this - O there might



be named a glorious company whose garments we never defiled by these abominations and whose ardent and unconquerable faith whose humility and love and sacrifices in the cause of Christ present models for our imitation.

You are aware of Christian hearer that we cannot on this occasion enter into a particular detail of the character of the several believers that have been named. But there are certain general characteristics shining brighter in some than others which we would now proceed to hold up for imitation to all those who are desirous of inheriting the promises. We shall name four particulars in which these eminent servants of God have left a shining example.

Let it not be thought however that we imagine these men to have been sinless and therefore worthy of imitation in everything. Alas the pen of inspiration has delineated with unalleviated faithfulness their many and sometimes most shocking apostasies. And far be it from us to propose these transgressions for examples worthy to be followed or to suggest that they afford for the shadow of an excuse for the sinning Christian. No - to the character of every one of these men and of every other Christians there is always reason for adding this painful exception. *Be ye followers of this man so far and only so far as he was a follower of Christ.*

Still however when we look at the characters of the patriarchs prophets apostles and martyrs of the Scriptures as a whole we perceive certain predominant features worthy to be held up to the view of every eye and to be enforced upon every heart. And the first of these characteristics we shall name was *an unwavering faith in God.*

In order rightly to estimate the force of this remark in regard to these believers who lived previous to the coming of Christ it ought to be remembered that the object of faith were much more feebly presented to their minds then to those who enjoy the unclouded light of the gospel. Yet amid all the dimness with which God and the Redeemer and heaven were beheld did they most fearlessly rely upon their reality and excellence. How resolutely does David exclaim, *I will trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.* Job too groping in the double darkness that hung over him exclaimed, *though he slay me yet will I trust in him.* *Blessed is the man,* said Jeremiah, *that trusteth in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is.* And Isaiah says, *Who is among you that feareth the Lord? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God.* It was faith that brought down the fiery chariot and carried Elijah up to heaven. And he might we quote the whole of the 11th chapter of Hebrews as a most elegant and forcible demonstration of the strength of the faith of the saints under the old dispensation. Doubtless you remember how we are there told that by faith Enoch was translated that he would not see death - how Noah By faith prepared an ark to the saving of his house - how by faith Abraham went fearlessly out not knowing whither he went and how by faith he raised the deadly knife over the bosom of his innocent Son - how By faith Isaac blessed Esau and Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph - how by faith, Moses refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter - choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season - how he forsook Egypt passed through the Red Sea and the forty years wilderness - and how by faith many others, *subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions - quenched the violence of fire - out of weakness were made strong waxed valiant in fight turned to flight fight the armies of alienation.* And this same Apostle who so forcibly describes the faith of the ancients was himself a triumphant instance of it. Under its full influence you hear him exclaiming, *I know in whom I have believed - I have fought a good fight - I have finished my course - henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will give me in that day.* The apostle John also what an assurance of faith does he exhibit

when he says- *this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith. We know that we have passed from death onto life because we came we love the brethren.* And what was it but faith that gave to the other Apostles and the evangelists and the mighty army of martyrs - the triumph over their passions - over the temptations before them - over the assaults of the adversary and finally cry over the agonies of an untimely and agonizing [cruel] death? O it was a faith that could remove mountains - a faith of which the world was not worthy - of faith which is now most gloriously rewarded in heaven. (see last page, Asterisk \*)

*[The following paragraph added at the end of the sermon appears to have been intended for insertion at the asterisk.]*

The second distinguishing feature in the character of those who inherit the promises was a trust for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. To the ancient saints there was a darkness hanging over the character of the redeemer yet feeling their need of some righteousness not their own they joyfully serve upon the obscure intimations given them of the one great sacrifice to come as the *days man between God and their souls who should lay his hand upon them both.* Said Jacob to his sons, *The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* Said Moses to the Israelites, *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee of thy brethren like unto me unto him shall ye hearken.* And we are told by Paul that Moses, *esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.* Said Job, *I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.* And we need not mention the descriptions of Christ in the Psalms and Prophets of which they are full. Is it not also unnecessary to say that the servants of the Gospel dispensation whether they lived - lived to Christ and whether they did die to Christ? It was not only the language of Paul but of every faithful preacher of the Gospel – *I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.* This name indeed has been the believers support and trust and consolation and triumph in prosperity and adversity and his glory constitutes the everlasting song of the redeemer.

The sufferings and sacrifices of those who inherit the promises while on earth forms a third distinguishing feature of their character. The assertion of Paul that, *all who live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution,* will in some sense apply to all Christians but it applies eminently to those whose history is contained in the bible. Which of these was not forced to sacrifice his comfort (ease) or wealth or life to his religion. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt and by adhering to his duty he lost a crown – and subjected himself to all the hardships of a forty years sojourning in the wilderness. Lot was compelled to abandon his possessions in Sodom and escape for his life. David complains repeatedly of those enemies who persecuted him without a cause. Zechariah was tortured to death – Micah slain unto the sword and Isaiah sawn asunder. The sufferings of these and many besides are described by Paul – *And other, says he, had a trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of hovels and imprisonment. They were stoned they were sawn asunder; were tempted were slain with the sword: they walked about in sheep skins and goat skins being destitute afflicted tormented - they wandered in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth.* And after the coming of Christ the firebrands of persecution seems to have been scattered anew. See you not the head of John the Baptist in that charger! See you not the blood of James streaming from the sword of Herod. See you not Stephen sinking beneath a throne of stones. Hear you not Paul in the name of the Christian church exclaiming - *we are troubled on every side yet not distressed; we are perplexed but not in despair - persecuted but not forsaken - cast down but not destroyed - always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.* And if you cast your eyes along the history of the church for several centuries what is to be seen but Christians dragged to prison or smarting under the lash - or melting

away at the stake. Yet brethren these are the men who now inherit the promises and whose example we are exhorted to follow.

We proceed to mention a fourth striking characteristic of these servants of God which deserves imitation. And that is their peculiar fortitude and resignation under the bereavements of Providence.

*Take my brethren the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and patience.* These holy men were indeed subjected to the loss of all things and were often driven from among men - and yet they ceased not to warn their cruel countrymen of their danger.

You have heard also of the patience of Job. Deprived of ten children of many servants and of all his vast possessions in one day and cast from the pinnacle of earthly happiness and glory to the depths of poverty and wretchedness - yet did he acquiescingly say, *Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away blessed be the name of the Lord.* David too wandering a persecuted outcast from wilderness to wilderness could exclaim, *when my father and mother forsake me then the Lord will take me up - I was dumb I opened not my mouth because thou didst it.* And how many since the Psalmists have in the day of affliction taken his word as the index of their hearts. Oh could they address us from the world of light where they were now inheriting the promises no doubt they would add also the sentiment of the apostle, *these light afflictions that were but for a moment have wrought out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

Such are the glorified believers and such the examples the voice of wisdom and the voice of an apostle exhorts us to imitate. And do not the funeral solemnities of this day remind us of another regenerated and sanctified spirit that has gone to join this happy company of the redeemed? Is it not within the bounds of an enlightened charity to believe that she whose mortal remains are before us has (is now) gone to inherit the promises? Perhaps it might be presumptuous of me to decide so important a question because my acquaintance with her has been so short and imperfect. But I appeal for the evidence to this temple of God which for more than thirty years has witnessed her commemoration of the dying love of her Saviour. I appeal to that *angel of the Lord who expleth round about them that fear him and delivereth him.* I appeal - no I will not call upon her departed spirit nor attempt to penetrate the veil that hangs between earth and heaven - but rather do I appeal to you my hearers - to these garments of mourning - to the tears of affection - and to that deep regret I see pictured on so many countenances. And say ye who have known her best - ye who have been nourished on her bosom and who now follow a fond mother to the grave. Oh do you not testify that she has brought you up for God - and that she has lived the life and died the death of a Christian? I appeal to you ye aged fathers and mothers who have for so many years been her companions - and I read in your countenances the answer - we sorrow not as those who are without hope. I appeal to this whole assembly and who is there that will not say a mother in Israel is fallen? I produce the testimony - the strongest that can be given - the testimony of her life for (more than forty) years among you and if evidence were still wanting I appeal to her firm confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ in her last days into that calmness and resignation she displayed in the hour when your soul lingered on the brink of time and burst away at length on the ocean of eternity.

Another name then Christian brethren is added to the cloud of witnesses with which you are compassed about. Again therefore may our text be repeated with a double emphasis - *be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* This inheritance is theirs because they were faithful in praying faithful in watching faithful in struggling against sin - *Go ye therefore and do likewise - Watch ye stand fast in the faith quit you like men be strong - Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*

Do you shrink from the thought of fighting always and watching always and praying always? Do you look upon the whole of life as too much to be spent in the work of preparation for eternity. What! Threescore years and ten too long a period to get the mastery over an evil heart - over a hostile world over principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places? Too longer a period to labor for an inheritance whose possession and enjoyment millions of ages will find but just beginning! Three score years and ten did I say? And is this period insured to you? Are you certain of 50 years of 40 of 30 of 20 of 10 – nay of one?

Yet you say, Christian, or your conduct says that the whole of life is too much to spend in working out your salvation. Oh estimate the value of that prize you are striving to obtain. It is not the riches or honors or pleasures of this world. It is not an earthly crown or kingdom. It is not a position that will terminate with three score years and ten - no nor a million doubled and multiplied without end. Estimate the value of this prize did I say? No - never can it be done until you can look through eternity - until you can measure the height and depth the length and breadth of the law of God.

And yet this life - swifter than a weaver's shuttle a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away - a flower blooming in the morning and withering in night – a dream that passes away ere we awake - this life is too long to spend in laboring for that prize which numbers cannot measure nor thought estimate. O what think ye Christian brethren would be the language of your departed friend were her voice permitted once more to be heard. Would she comment that she had spent too much time in the service of God. Would she regret that the prize of immortal glory is too mean for so much watching and fighting and praying? Would she exhort you to be more devoted to this world and to relax in your exertions for heaven?

And what think ye would this departed friend now say to those of us who have not yet taken one step after the example of those who are inheriting the promises? What would she say? What has she said? What has she said in her example - what in her profession of faith in the Lord Jesus! What upon the bed of death!

*A lesson silent but of sovereign power.*

And methinks we can even now hear her voice blended with the voice of prophets and apostles the speaking to the impenitent - *it is high time to awake out of sleep - Work while it is day - The night cometh wherein no man can work: For there is no work nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest. Behold now in the accepted time, behold now is it is the day of salvation. We are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ that be ye reconciled to God.*

Delivered

At Conway May 1821



## Sermon 59 Connection Between the Moral Character of Parents and Children

[Sermon No. 59, "Connection Between the Moral Character of Parents and Children," Exodus, Ch. 20, 1821 Jul, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 8]

Exodus 20:5 – 6

*For the Lord thy God am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the Fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and sharing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.*

Ezekiel 18:20

*The Son shall not bear the iniquity of the Father neither shall the Father bear the iniquity of the Son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him and the kindness of the wicked shall be upon him.*

*[Interesting discussion of parental influence on children.]*

Both the texts we have read are represented by the sacred writers as coming from the mouth of God. The first was delivered amid the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai and last is communicated to us through the prophet Ezekiel. The first is the solemn enforcement God gives to the second commandment of the decalogue and the last is the decisive answer of God to those Israelites who complained that they were compelled to bear the sins of their Fathers.

The infidel would doubtless discover in these passages a plain and irreconcilable contradiction. For in one of them God declares that he will visit the iniquity of the Fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations and in the other he as decidedly declares that the Son shall not bear the iniquity of the Father. These passages do indeed carry with them an apparent opposition and it may not be unprofitable to attempt their reconciliation especially as in thus doing we shall be called to examine some principles of great practical importance.

From a comparison of the two parts of our text with the general tenor of scripture and reason we think the two following propositions result which, if established, remove all appearance of contradiction or injustice.

First in a certain sense God deals with children according to the character of their parents.

Secondly - in a certain sense God does not visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children nor reward the children for the righteousness of their parents.

In discussing the subject we shall however invert the order of these propositions and find endeavor to show in what sense is God does not think the children according to the character of their parents.

Although there is a close connection between the conduct and feelings of the parent and his child, yet

the latter does not in all cases sustain the same moral character as the former. In this sense therefore God does not always visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children nor cause the son of the believer to tread in his footsteps. The history of the church furnishes many cheering examples where a son or daughter have been saved from the contaminating influence of ungodly parents - and over whom a daily intoxicated parent - the continual blasphemy of a father - and the adulterous wantonness of a mother - has had no influence to bear lure them from the wraths of the destroyer and who have come forth from such a moral pollution bearing the cross of Christ and shining among the adopted of God as the star of the first magnitude. There was Moses who escaped unhurt from all the temptations and pollutions of an Egyptian court - one of whose inmates had adopted him as her child. There was Abijah the Son of Jeroboam who as the prophet Abijah he declared, *had done evil above all that went before him*, was alone of all that wicked family permitted to come to his grave in peace, *because there was found in him some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel*. Asa too one of the worthiest of princes of Judah was the son of the wicked Abijah and who does not remember Jonathan the amiable son of Saul. But experiences also even in these days exhibits many instances of the like character. We see many a Lot maintaining his principles and Christian practice in the midst of many a miniature Sodom like a vigorous plant flourishing in the region of the dead and sending forth a wholesome influence from an atmosphere poisoned with a mortal contagion.

On the other hand it is painful to see many a son in dispute of the example the counsels and the prayers of a pious father and mother bent upon ruining his own soul and breaking their hearts. In vain has he been nursed on the bosom of piety and from a child instructed in the holy scriptures. In vain does filial affection and all the admonitions and entreaties of pious and parental fondness urge him to fly from the path of destruction. And God also answers not the supplications with strong crying and tears that are made to him in behalf of this infatuated child. Instances of this character are to be met with in the history of all nations. The third human being on this earth you recollect was Cain. Abraham in the bitterness of a disappointed father cried out to God, *O that Ishmael might live before thee!* Thereby implying that he had forsaken God. And the man after God's own heart had his peace broken by the incest of his Amnon and his life pit in jeopardy by the rebellion and unhallowed ambition of Absalom.

We need not appeal any further history or experience to prove that God does not in all cases entail upon the children the moral character of their parents. Neither in the second place does he punish the child in this world or the next for the sins of his father nor reward the child in this or a future world for the virtues of his father.

We know that there has been in former days and by some even now a language is used implying that the posterity of Adam are not only punishable for his sin but are actually guilty of it. And if this were indeed true it might with equal force apply the same reasoning to the relation between any parent and his child. But we *have not so harmed Christ if so be that we have been taught of him*. The idea that one man can consistently with justice be punished for the doings of another which is implied in the declaration that we are punishable for Adam's sin must be denied either from reason or the bible - let us see from which?.

It is a principal in casuistry too plain almost to need a labored argument in its support that no moral action is or can be transferable from one free agent to another. For the very definition of such a being implies that it is only for his own voluntary deeds and motives that he is accountable - or rewardable. He may indeed suffer consequences for the sins of another or be benefitted by the virtues of another. But there is a wide difference between suffering and punishment. The first may come upon a being in consequence of his necessary connection with another being and does not by any means imply any

displeasure on the part of God towards the sufferer. Much less does it imply that the guilt of the guilty is literally imputed to the innocent so that God inflicts upon innocent beings the punishment of another sin. Now the connection between Adam and his posterity is such that in consequence of his sin they suffer (death for instance) yet we have no evidence that this suffering comes upon them as a punishment for his sin and until there be found some such evidence we have a right to infer the contrary: because the supposition is irreconcilable with our ideas of perfect justice. It may indeed be said that had every individual of Adam's posterity been placed in his situation they would all have been guilty of the like offense and therefore it is right that all should be punished for that sin. But let such a principle be brought down to the affairs of common life and see to what extravagances it will lead! We see many who manifest a most decided disposition to steal to defraud and murder and whom mere local circumstances prevents from the commission of such crimes. Would it therefore be just to cast these men into prison as thieves and defrauders and murderers? Precisely as just my hearers as it would be to punish children for the crimes of their parents because they inherit from them similar dispositions and might therefore in like circumstances commit similar crimes.

On the other hand it is as absurd to suppose that in justice any one being will be rewarded strictly for the virtues of another. What if the virtues of another cannot be regarded as his virtues - God may show favour to one being in consequence of what another has done - as he has in fact done to man in consequence of the merits of Christ but in this case there is no real transfer of righteousness from the one to the other. Adam is pardoned through Christ's sufferings and obedience: but throughout the scriptures we find it uniformly kept in view that Christ's righteousness still remains his own righteousness and is not actually taken from him and implanted in the soul of man as his own individual rightful property. For if such were the case man might claim salvation as a debt due from God.

Reason then my hearers decides unequivocally that God does not in this or another world punish the children for the crimes nor reward them for their virtues of their fathers. And to determine what the Bible decides upon this point we need only refer to the last part of our text. During the Babylonian captivity the Jews had a proverb whose import was that they were suffering for the sins of their fathers. God therefore sent Ezekiel unto them to vindicate his justice and the language of this prophet to his countrymen it might seem should forever set at rest the question whether men are punished for the sins of their fathers. *What mean ye that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel saying the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live saith the Lord ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are mine; as a soul the father so also the soul of the Son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die.* Yet to this decided declaration of the prophet the Israelites reply by an allusion to the former part of our text which is a part of the second commandment of the decalogue. *Why? say they does not the son bear the iniquity of the Father.* To this the prophet again replies, *When the son hath done that which is lawful and right and hath kept all my statutes and hath done them he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall bear the iniquity of the father neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.* The tenor of the whole bible evinces that a wicked man will be punished for his own sins and for his own sins only and that a righteous man will be rewarded for his own righteousness and not for that of his progenitors.

But this remark shows us that we have reached the second division of this discourse in which we are to enquire in what sense God deals with children according to the characters of their parents. We have already remarked that the former part of our text implies that in some way or other God does thus deal with children. And in the first place He inflicts upon the offspring of irreligious parents many temporal judgments and bestows upon the children of pious parents many temporal mercies.



Who has not heard of those diseases which sometimes are hereditary in a family to the third and fourth generation? And many of these are originated by the ungodly conduct of the first father in the series. Thus a man may have indulged till it has become a second nature a passionate and unkind disposition and it is by no means improbable that his son or daughter may have towards this sin a strong constitutional tendency. And not to add any more to the disgusting list the man of habitual intemperance after often entails upon his children an almost unconquerable inclination towards the same brutal indulgence so that those children may be called natural drunkards.

But these are not the only judgments of God experienced by the descendants of the irreligious. Want and Infamy almost inevitably attach to the intemperate the profligate and idle man and in these evils his children almost necessarily share. It may be wrong but it is difficult to look upon the son of a thief or liar or robber or gangster or drunkard or blasphemer or adulterer without remembering his father and having a suspicion exciting within us that the son may follow in the same course of perdition. Some of this clan do indeed by their conduct manifest so permanent and decided deterioration of the habits of their parents that we have no such fears: but where we know little of the child there is in truth much reason to fear that through the influence of example he may imbibe the like poisonous principles and follow in the same track to hell.

But this picture is entirely sincere in the case of religious parents. Their children inherit the firm constitutions and the healthful habits of their fathers and share in the well-earned fame that follows virtue in its most retired walks. We mean that these things usually take place not inevitably and while they manifest in the exceptions the sovereignty of God they also exhibit the complacency with which he witnesses parental piety.

In the second place God deals with children according to the character of their parents by giving them in most though not in all cases the same moral character as their parents. He has so constituted the human mind that it almost inevitably endeavors to imitate those to whom it is most nearly allied. Natural reverence therefore - natural affection every thing indeed conspires to make the child endeavor to imitate its parents. Why therefore should not the temperate industrious and amiable parent find growing up around him temperate industrious and amiable children? And on the other hand why should not the profane sneerer expect to his children inheriting from him the tongue of blasphemy? And why should the covetous man calculate upon any other than a niggardly pennywise spirit in his children? Why should the hardhearted man look in his children for a feeling of sympathy and compassion? Why should not the progeny of a prayerless man cast off fear and restrain prayer? Why should not the descendants of the man who is ignorant of the bible remain as ignorant as himself? Why should not the idle man expect a responding cry from the mouths of his children, *a little more sleep a little more slumber - there is a lion in the way.*

And these evil habits which are thus imperceptibly and almost inevitably derived from parents very generally become firmer and firmer through life and conduct the miserable child to everlasting perdition. So that the father and the son having jointly sinned through life sink together into that world where the son will not cease through eternity to reproach the father and the father the son the one for his poisonous example the other for his blind imitation.

Yet let it not be said because a parent who is irreligious usually drags down with him his children to endless ruin that therefore they are punished for his sin. No they are free agents - they have had the warnings of conscience of reason of the bible and the Holy Spirit all conspiring to tell them that they are

following down to the chambers of death. And if face they still persist unless righteously will they be eternally punished not for their fathers iniquity but for their own - and amid all the agony the reproaches and blasphemies of eternity never will they dare on this account to lisp a murmur against the justice of God.

Many solemn and interesting reflections crowd upon the mind in review of this subject my hearers: but we have room for dwelling only upon this one. What an awakening motive is here presented to parents to improve every opportunity in their power for bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!

We have shown you the close connection there is in the government of God between the exertions and examples of parents and the eternal welfare of their children. It is in vain to murmur that such a connection exists for it most certainly does exist - and who is there so devoid of sensibility as not to do that the utmost in his power to secure if not for himself yet for his children everlasting happiness? Who is there so devoid of the common feelings of humanity as to neglect those whom he may be the means of making blessed forever? Who is there so wanting in love for his own children as the lead them voluntarily into a misery no language can describe and no minutes estimate? O by all the tender feelings you possess for your offspring by the mercies of God of infinite compassion we conjure your parents whether you be Christian or not - let not your example be such - let not your neglect be such - let not your cruelty be such as to conduct these precious immortal souls committed to your care to that world where, *hope never comes that comes to all*.

And my brethren may we not regard as one of the means put into your hands for securing your children from eternal misery the institution of Sabbath schools? Certain it is that these have been blessed all the civilized world over. Certain it is that thousands in Europe and many in this and other lands have in those schools first felt the arrows of conviction fastening upon their consciences and making a wound none but the great physician of souls could cure. Certain it is that the praise of these institutions is in all the churches of Christ throughout the world and they have caused many a heart among the poor and ignorant - nay among the rich and learned also to sing for joy. And indeed why should not the study of the scriptures be one of the most powerful means God has put into our hands for repairing for heaven? For he is directed all men to search the Scriptures and commanded parents to track these things, *to their delinquent children and to talk of them when they sit in their houses and when they walk by the way and when they lie down and when they rise up*. God therefore will most assuredly bless those children who faithfully and diligently study his word and where can they study it to better advantage than in an institution like the one we are now contemplating.

And is it possible parents in view of this subject and in view of the subject we have this morning presented before you is it possible you should be indifferent? Is it possible you should neglect to bring forward your children to put them in the way of preparing for a blessed eternity? O beware lest these children reproach you on their dying beds. What if it should prove that these schools were the only means God in his providence would condescend to bless for their salvation! And what if you be first made acquainted with this fact in the day of judgment! O be wise in time. Beware parents of bringing upon you by neglect the eternal reproaches of your children. Beware ye children of misimproving the present precious opportunity. But beware ye instructors of offending by your recent unfaithfulness one of these little ones and thereby involving them and yourselves in everlasting and eternal woe.

Delivered  
At Conway July 1821

## Sermon 60 Consecration of All to God

[Sermon No. 60, "Consecration of All to God," Isaiah 52:1, 1821 Jul, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 9]

Isaiah 62:1

*For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

*[Reference to important Unitarian theologians of Hitchcock's day, Noah Worcester, Thomas Scott. The end of the sermon seems to be missing.]*

This ardent and elevated resolution of the prophet must have had for its object not merely the temporal good of Jerusalem and Zion. Under those terms he unquestionably comprehended the Church of Christ and when in the visions of God his eye was carried along the stream of time to the latest generations of the earth and saw the gathering of all nations unto Shiloh that was to come - when among the rest his own brethren were flying to his standard as clouds and as doves to their windows - it is no wonder that he should feel an ardent desire to see these days of peace and joy hastened on. No wonder when he learnt that God would give bring about these glorious days through the prayers and labors of his children, he should within an holy love to the church resolve to set an example of resolution and perseverance in the use of means. And not only did he intercede himself for the prosperity of Zion but he exhorted others to do likewise - *ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Go through go through the gates, prepare you the way of the people, cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.*

From our text my hearers we may derive two very important principles which we shall endeavor to defend and illustrate.

- 1 - God is establishing his kingdom in the world for the instrumentality of men
- 2 - To the advancement of that cause men are bound to hold all their faculties and possessions devoted.

It was an act of the most glaring infatuation and impious rebellion in man to spurn away from him the authority and protection of heaven and to set up the standard of universal revolt throughout the race. To defy even in archangels who excel in strength be regarded by sober reason as unwarrantable presumption: but how does it magnify this perception to contemplate man as throwing the gauntlet of defiance against his Maker, man whose strength is weakness and who is crushed before the wrath! How then can we measure the length and breadth the height and depth of that love which could stoop from the throne of Omnipotence to extend the sceptre of mercy to this rebellious outcast! Yet God has thus stooped and has put in requisition the whole universe to secure him from misery. Need we tell you of that covenant between the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son? We refer you to the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Need we tell you of an Holy Spirit Comforter sent down to regenerate and save the elect of God according to his knowledge? You will remember the first Pentecost after Christ's ascension. And then to

is the Bible which is *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

Yes to all this preparation it was necessary to add the instrumentality of man in order that the kingdom of God might be set up in an alienated world. The church of God undoubtedly began with Adam: that is he was a member of the true spiritual church: but in the days of his son Seth the first declaration of the existence of the church seems to have been made - *And to Seth to him also there was born a son: and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord*, or as it is translated in the margin, *to call themselves by the name of the Lord*. That is evidently they took upon themselves the title of the Sons of God considering themselves as a peculiar people in distinction from wicked men who were then as now governed *by the god of this world - the Prince of the power of the air*. And ever since that early period there have never wanted a few to constitute the kingdom of God - to vindicate the honor of God and to form a rallying point for his friends in a world of enemies. To defend and enlarge this Zion - many a Moses and Savior many a king and many a prophet spent their strength and their lives among the Jews. And to give a deathblow to opposition - *to destroy the works of the devil was the son of God manifested in the flesh* - driven through the world shelterless and friendless insulted and crucified. And then are after him his company of disciples and evangelists whose hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob to fight the battles of faith. And though those were days of peril when all the opposing hosts of earth and hell were sallied to crush the church yet did these men *wax valiant in fight and turn to flight the armies of the aliens. Though the enemy then came in like a flood yet did the Lord lift up a standard against him* and the king of David prevailed over the giant sword of Goliath. How appalling to any but such men as the disciples of Christ must have been the prospect before them when commanded to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature - a world whose powers whose inclinations whose rulers whose practice was all arrayed against them - a world universally lying in wickedness - a world in which they were regarded as *the offscouring of all things and the filth of the earth*. Yet was it enough to render them unmoved in view of all these discouragements to have before them the example of the Master and to know that they were about to labor for the salvation of the souls of their fellow men - and for a crown of glory as their reward. Neither did these men consider personal exertions and sacrifices unnecessary because God must give the increase. They labored as if all depended upon themselves as they prayed as if the works depended wholly on God. But their record is on high as it is also in your hearts my hearers. And you ought never to forget that it was through the instrumentality of such men that the kingdom of God has come even unto us and has not been destroyed amid all the buffetings of Satan the devastations of progeny and the hostility of the human heart.

The kingdom of God on earth is compared in the prophecy of Daniel to *a stone cut out without hands and becoming a great mountain and filling the whole earth*. By the Psalmist the church is called a vine - *Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparest room for it and didst cause it to take deep root and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it and the bows there were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea and her branches unto the river*. We live in a day when this stone has already become a great mountain: but it does not yet fill the earth. That vine which has been so often wasted and burnt with fire since the days of Christ is in these days shooting forth new branches in every direction and already its fruit is scattered through many nations. But do you think that this stone would have thus enlarged or this vine thus extended without the culture of man? Experience shows that when men do not dig about it and prune it and water it it universally decays and where men are most unwearied in its cultivation there is this vine the most vigorous in its growth and most productive in its fruit. God has promised that he will cause this

vine to spread out and its benefits to the humblest corners of the earth. *Glorious things are spoken of thee O city of our God. I have shown by myself says Jehovah the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas.* And is this mighty work to be accomplished by a miracle? Brethren do we believe that the tenor of the Scriptures and the dealings of God with this church for eighteen hundred years evince that the same means will be employed to the end of this great work that we are now employed. We believe that an increasing interest in the hearts of Christians in a tenfold greater effort than the world has just witnessed will be all the miracle by which God will because *all nations which he has made to come and worship before him.* God has commanded his followers to *go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.* But had he intended to convert any by miracle this command would be superfluous and not binding upon men.

The second principle involved in the text in our apprehension is that men in Christian lands are bound to hold all their faculties and all their possessions devoted to the advancement of Christ's kingdom among men. For Jerusalem's sake, *I will not rest till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp burneth.* This expression implies that this prophet would exert himself to the very utmost of his abilities to bring about such a state of things in the Church. For had he stopped short of devoting himself and his time and possessions to the object he would have rested in a degree and left his resolution unperformed.

But what do we mean by saying that we are bound to hold our faculties and possessions devoted to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom? We do not mean that every man must forsake his regular calling and become a minister of the Gospel or a missionary because every man has his own proper gift. We do not mean that man should bestow all the property upon benevolent objects when this would reduce them and their families to want and misery. For this would retard rather than advance the cause of religion because he that *provides not for his own household hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.* We do not even mean that in ordinary cases men should neglect their regular employments to advance the cause of religion: because in general they will most promote that because by regular and industrious attention to their ordinary business. And yet there is little need of cautioning men against such an excess of zeal - for few are there who will voluntarily forsake houses and lands and wife and children for the cause of Christ and where one man neglects his secular business to attend to religion ten thousand neglect religion to attend to their secular business. But to return to the point -

By the phrase that we are bound to hold our faculties and possessions devoted to the cause of Christ we mean that we ought to look upon those faculties and those possessions as borrowed of God and that he has the right to demand them at any moment and for any purpose. Hence then if God has a particular object to effect say for instance to establish his kingdom on earth, and he has declared that this shall be done through the use of the faculties and possessions he has given to man we say should look upon himself and his property pledged to effect that object. And he should watch the indications of Providence to see just how much of his individual efforts and individual charities are necessary for accomplishing the work. It may be that the fingers of Providence will clearly point out to him that he should devote himself and his possessions exclusively to the work and devices of a missionary. It may be that a variety of considerations render such a course inexpedient and that a part of his services and possessions only are required to carry on the great works. This is in fact the case with the great majority of men and indeed some have so many other more imperious duties pressing upon them that their exertions and charities are necessarily much limited. And yet we can scarcely conceive of a man in such circumstances that he is not bound to do something to promote the most important object on earth -

the advancement of religion. Certainly is he bound to yield his own heart to its influence and thus will he add one subject to God's kingdom.

We proceed to exhibit briefly the grounds of the right God has to claim our faculties and possessions for the advancement of his kingdom. And first he drives this right from our creation.

This argument to induce man to submit to the sovereignty of God was formerly put into the mouth of Jeremiah. *Behold as the clay is in the potters hand so are ye in my hand O house of Israel.* Paul too appeals to the same illustration. *Hath not the potter power over the clay to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?* We will suppose a potter to have dug clay from the earth with his own hands and to have formed it into such a vessel as he saw fit would you not say without hesitation that this man had a right to use that vessel in any way he wished? And if the mere molding of that clay gave this man an undisputed power over the vessel formed from it how much more unquestionable is the right of God over those creatures he has made to use them in whatever way his wisdom or will may choose?

God denies another right to the services of man from the redemption by his Son. Man long under the curse of a broken law and without that redemption must inevitably and eternally have perished. And besides God was under not the shadow of an obligation to send his Son to die for man's offences. Yet did he raise the sword against the man that was his fellow man was rescued and saved. A debt of gratitude therefore is imposed upon him which he cannot conceal though he devote every faculty and every moment and every possession to God's service.

Another ground of God's right to the services of his creatures is driven from his preserving them. What if his hand were withdrawn from beneath them for a moment? They must inevitably sink. And more than all this man for his sins deserves thus to be forsaken of God and to drop into annihilation. God's condescension and mercy therefore richly deserve the consecration of every faculty and possession to his will and to be disposed of for his glory.

We might add other grounds of God's right to employ the services of his creatures - but we have already established it by a triple argument and *a threefold cord is not quickly broken*. The only question that remains is whether God does in fact require his creatures to devote their faculties and possessions to the advancement of his kingdom in the world.

Have we not already shown my hearers that God has established that kingdom through the instrumentality of man? Does not the text imply this? Do not a host of texts calling upon Christians to come up to help the Lord against the mighty imply it? Does not the history of the church in all ages especially since the days of Christ irresistibly establish the fact? And if any more proof be wanting we refer to that most decisive command of Christ to his disciples *go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*. Here is a command reaching to every disciple of Christ and imperiously binding upon everyone so long as there is a human being on earth who has never heard the good news of a Saviour. For that this command was not confined to the first disciples is evident not only from the subjoined or promise that Christ would be with them always even to the end of the world but also because those apostles could not preach the Gospel to every creature even if they had been as unwearied as their master. If then the Disciples of Christ

If then the disciples of Christ in every age are commanded to preach the Gospel and if they cannot all go forth personally to do this as ministers or as missionaries must they not do it by their prayers by their

mutual exhortations and by their possessions and is not every child of God born to regard himself and all that belong to him as pledges for the fulfillment of the command? And as all men are solemnly required to become the disciples of Christ we do not see why the same conservation of all they are and all they possess is not binding upon every son and daughter of Adam - where the Gospel has come.

We cannot dismiss this subject without making two enquiries. First, what have we done my hearers for the cause of Christ?

When we put this question to professors of religion we will not insult them in this day of exertion by asking whether they have done anything nor is the question whether they have done enough to silence the rebukes of conscience in this world - but have we done so much as we shall regard enough up at the bar of God? Have we done so much that we shall not be ashamed in that day to have an account of it held up before the Universe? Have we done so much that we shall not wish in that day we had done more? I charge a deficiency in these things upon no one but myself - yet it will not in any case be unprofitable to urge these enquiries upon our consciences, *for if we should judge ourselves we should not be judged.*

But are there not some before me who if asked what they have done for the cause of Christ, would be compelled to answer that they have not yet even given him their own hearts? What! live in a Gospel land with the Bible in our hands and have one day in seven set apart expressly for the purpose of making our peace with God - and have set before our eyes almost daily on the one hand the joys of heaven and on the other hand the pains of hell - and be told from the word of God that if we believe not the Son we are condemned already - and yet after all do resist this world of motives and persevere in holding back our hearts from Christ and in trampling under foot the son of God O this is an infatuation at which devils would be confounded and angels weep!

The second enquiry we have to propose my hearers is this - *What do we intend to do in the future for the cause of Christ?* Have your exertions Christian in behalf of your God and Redeemer been feeble. Have your prayers for the uncorrected moved and for the twice dead brethren been few and formal. Have your admonitions and exhortations and charities been checked or stunted by an insensible heart? Thus it is high time for us to awaken out of sleep. What think ye of the immortal souls around you dead in trespasses and sins and hurrying onward blindfold as fast as time can carry them to their final and eternal doom - whom perhaps your prayers were they fervent and effectual might secure? What think ye of that mighty empire the prince of darkness maintains over so many nations? Do you not see his many strongholds in this rebellious world - his towers and ramparts standing in the midst of us - overlooking the fortunes of Christianity and frowning upon them a proud defiance? And what think you of those dark places where this terrifick prince stretches a sceptre tremendous as his malice can make it over an unresisting multitude and every heart becomes as gloomy and hopeless as that world where this monster reigns upon a throne of fire and brimstone? And yet this black dominion stretches over many a heart, many a tribe and many an empire of our world.

But on the other hand the subjects of God's kingdom on earth are comparatively few and apart from his assistance their exertions are comparatively feeble. And in addition to this an alarming inroad has of late been made upon that kingdom. A voice has come from the east and the voice from the west a voice of us against Zion - a voice proclaiming that the strong pillars of the Church have fallen. Scott and Worcester are gone - men who for many years have stood in the forefront of the hottest battle with the enemies of God and hazarded their all for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ - men who were mighty in the Scriptures - men whose praise is in all the churches - men whose names the poor miserable outcasts

of India and Africa and the islands of the sea and the natives of our own wilderness have often repeated in broken accents and with tears of gratitude - and who will weep in the unaffected simplicity of nature over their memories as for their fathers. Yet have these men fought a good fight - have they kept the faith and through now *they have finished their course* yet do we believe that there is laid up for them crowns of glory that will never fade away.

*Servants of God! well done!*

*Rest from your loved employ*

*The battle fought the victory won*

*Enter your Master's joy. (Hymn by James Montgomery?)*

No doubt at the fall of such men the prince of darkness and all his legions triumph and take fresh courage. But to every surviving Christian the loss of such eminent services speaks an awakening lesson. But that triumphing believers in Christ must be made short. Let every man who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity at such a season fix firmer upon him the armour of the Gospel. Let him pray that the mantle of Elijah may fall upon some Elisha. Let him serve up his heart to a more resolute encounter than ever with the enemies of godliness. Let us all awake in the strength of the Lord - and in the strength of the Lord resolve that for Zion's sake we will yet know our peace and for Jerusalem's sake we will not rest until God's...

Delivered

At Conway July 1821

At Conway February 1826



## Sermon 61 Men by Nature Dead in Sin

[Sermon No. 61, "Men By Nature Dead in Sin," Exodus 12:33, 1821 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 9]

Exodus 12:33

*We be all dead men.*

The Egyptians in the days of Pharaoh and Moses saw one judgment after another come upon them so rapidly and heavily that they were at length aroused to the danger and urged the departure of the Israelites from the land. They had seen the turning of their rivers into blood followed by an inundation of frogs - nest of flies – then of lice - after this a deadly plague upon their cattle - then fiery boils on man and beast - then in Jerusalem the thunder and hail the locusts and a proverbial darkness. And at last God smote them in a tender point by slaying their first born. Alarmed and subdued at length by those evils that waxed more and more intolerable, *the Egyptians were urgent upon the people that they might send them out of the land in haste for they said We be all dead men.*

My hearers what if we should make use of the words of the text in a spiritual sense? What if in the face of all the tenderness and sensibility and amiableness and morality to be found among us I should bring forward and an undistinguished charge upon the whole human race and endeavor to maintain the by nature, *We be all dead men? Dead in trespasses and sins* - dead to our eternal interests – dead to all homage and love towards God? No doubt the man of many fine accomplishments will be disgusted at so sweeping a charge made upon him - a charge which stamps at once an entire worthlessness in the sight of God upon all his deeds of honor integrity and benevolence because they want that without which no action can be pleasing to him that is known to him as their motive – a charge in short which brands the forehead of every unregenerate man from the most openly corrupt to the most upright with the same odious inscription - *an enemy of God*. And yet severe and unfounded as this charge may seem to any we come forward fearlessly to make it. Let us appeal to the evidence. The assertion you recollect is that by nature in other words before regeneration in a spiritual sense, *We be all dead men.*

The final evidence we have to address in proof of this assertion is the Word of God.

If any charge us with illiberality and severity in making the charge of spiritual death upon every unregenerate son and daughter of Adam the Ephesian church had the right reason to regard Paul illiberal and severe when he tells them without exception, *And you hath he (God) quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past ye walking according to the courage of this world according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that none marketh in the children of disobedience.* But Paul does not stop with the Ephesians. He applies the same character to every professor of religion that then existed. *Among whom also says he that is among the children of disobedience, we all had our conversation in times past in the history of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.* But neither does Paul stop here. Though he had charged every every professed Christian on earth whether Jew or Gentile with having been once dead in trespasses and sins yet now does he extend this charge to the whole human family. For he added *And we were by nature the children of wrath even as others.*

My hearers we beg you to look once more at this most decided and alarming text. Paul is here addressing the Gentile church. And he tells them indiscriminately that they were formerly dead in trespasses and sins. And what can this mean but that they were utterly alienated from God in their hearts and given over to work wickedness greedily and therefore enemies of God. We say therefore enemies of God because the carnal mind which they possessed is enmity against God. And the Apostle tells the Ephesians that in this state of Spiritual health they, *in time past walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air. The Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. According to the course of this world!* What is that my hearers? Most certainly according to the customs fashions and maxims of the world. And with what does the Apostle couple the course of the world? *According to the course of this world, says he, according to the prince of the powers of the air the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* That is whoever lives according to the customs fashion and maxims of this world do in fact live according to the will of the Devil. And therefore you Ephesians formerly lived according to the will of the Devil. Yet certain it is however harsh this language may sound to our ears that Paul charged that whole church with having formerly lived according to the will of Satan. In that church undoubtedly were many who before regeneration had been amiable and respectable. And yet the Apostle makes no distinction nor does he tell them that they occasionally were under his influence but that they walked in the paths of the great adversary - that is their lives were devoted to the performance of his will.

In then directing the Ephesians to their original opposition to God, Paul was reminded of his own original state and he next proceeds to declare that the same charge of living under the influence of Satan might justly be fixed upon himself and indeed upon every Christian then living. The Jewish Christians having had the oracles of God and so many advantages might be thought to have been before conversion comparatively pure. But Paul applies the same language to Jews and Gentiles. Among whom or after the example of whom says he that is among the children of disobedience *we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.* These children of disobedience were those in whom Paul says, *the Prince of the power of the air now worketh.* And they lived according to the course of this world. Now the apostle declares that himself and all other Christians had followed their example and therefore he declares himself and all other Christians to have lived formerly under the influence of Satan and to have been dead in trespasses and sins.

But the Christian church at that time was small and perhaps all its members had formerly been of abandoned character. While among the better part of society among Jews and Gentiles many moral and amiable men might be found to whom Paul would never apply such sweeping and severe epithets. Listening then to the concluding member of the sentence and *we were by nature children of wrath even as others.* That is they were by the indulgence of their natural deprave dispositions exposed to and desiring of the wrath of God even as others. And whom does he mean by others unless it be the whole human race? What is there to limit the phrase to a few? We can perceive nothing. The same charge therefore that Paul fixed upon the Ephesians he fixes upon himself and upon all his fellow Christians and finally he fixes it upon the whole human family. The text we have been considering most certainly contains without stretching its meaning by one jot or tittle the following assertions. All men before their conversion whether Jews or Gentiles are dead in trespasses and sins. They live according to the course of this world according to its customs fashions and maxims. Nay they live according to the will of Satan and under his influence. They live to greatly gratify the lust of the flesh and the desire of the flesh and imagination. They live totally regardless of the will of God and therefore and by nature liable to suffer the eternal wrath of God.

Is not this my hearers the fair and evident meaning of the Apostle? Can you candidly affix any other to this passage without harming it? We had collected a number of texts from Scripture to establish this same point. We intended to repeat to you the declaration of the Lord Jesus when he said that even now the *dead hear his voice and come forth* alluding to the natural heart. And we could have held up before you the terrific description Paul gives in Romans both of the Jews and Gentiles while in a state of unregeneracy: and how he calls upon him, *that sleeps to awake and arise from the dead that Christ might give him light*. And how John describes the conversion of himself and others as a passage from death into life. But we think it but best upon the whole to let the doctrine at this time to rest solely on the text we have so fully explained for if that does not convince men that they are not really dead in trespasses and sins we know of no human language that can do it and if they will evade that text they will evade all language of the bible.

The second evidence we produce to show that men are naturally dead in trespasses and sins is the history of the human races.

Whoever believes the scriptures must believe that the knowledge of the one true God was communicated to the first inhabitants of the world. And yet how soon and universally man turned to idolatry! Now soon did he corrupt his way upon the earth, *and change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things so that God can give them over to a reprobate mind!* The Jews too could not be restrained from idolatry that sin of all others most hateful to God by a constant repetition of the most astonishing miracles. Even at the foot of Sinai all the glory of God rested upon its top like a devouring fire did this nation see a molten calf and fall down to worship it.

All these facts prove a strong inherited tendency in man to idolatry - and if this does not show a heart sunk in Spiritual death we know not that any proof can be given. What forget the being who made us and upholds us - the being who is alone worthy to be supremely loved and obeyed! Forget the most interesting fact that can possibly be revealed to man! Nay more not only to forget God but prefer to believe in and to trust in those idols which can neither see nor hear nor know - forsake the eternal all manifest God and trust in a stock or a stone! If this does not show that we are all by nature dead men we again ask how can it be proved?

But again - Ever since the days of Adam the earth has been filled with violence and blood - and all the vices and enemies that were ranked in the bosoms of devils have let loose to rage and riot among men. *God looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside they are altogether become guilty; there is none that does good no not one.* Where then in the whole earth could any thing be found that might be called spiritual life? O the sleep of death has been upon the eyelids of men ever since the days of Adam and would seal them in eternal slumber did not the Spirit of God give life to a few. Among the innumerable millions that have peopled this earth there has been indeed much that was amiable and upright and in the view of men really praiseworthy: but the eye of an omniscient God looked upon the hearts of all these millions of men in their natural state and pronounced of every one of them that in relation to him there was an utter alienation and the God who cannot die has declared that among them all there was *none that did good - no not one.*

The third proof the we be by nature Spiritually dead men is found in the fact that while in a natural state we are prone to disbelieve it.

It is a command of God to his creatures that they should love him with all their hearts and minds and strength and that in every one of their actions they should have a reference to his glory. Now it is a fact which every man must acknowledge that the great majority of men totally neglect this command and live in forgetfulness of God. But unregenerate men do not generally look upon this fact as evidence that men are Spiritually dead. On the contrary they are disposed to think well of the human heart and to excuse its sinfulness. This is just what we might expect from a man who was himself spiritually dead. We should presume that he would not realize his disorder: because he is sunk so low by it that he is in a state of almost as great insensibility as that of natural death. The history of the church too will show that these men who have been most eminent for their piety have had the deepest sense of their own innate depravity. While on the other hand it is a very common thing for those who will acknowledge themselves to be destitute of religion to look up on man's heart as containing some innate goodness and be offended at the heavy charges of Spiritual death in opposition to God that are made upon us by an hardhearted gloomy and unyielding orthodoxy. And as the different views of this subject by these different men is just what we might expect if these charges be true we think there is hence derived a presumptive argument that they are true. The man therefore does not view his *heart as deceitful above all things and desperately wicked* has reason to fear that the state of religion within his soul if he had any is at its lowest ebb.

We have a hand another evidence that by nature we be Spiritually dead. And that is the indifference and neglect with which men treat the offers of the Gospel.

Had the Gospel contained a system of the most rigorous and difficult requirements - had it for instance demanded man to love a cruel and malignant being had it demanded of him an atonement for his sins - had it made necessary the most severe penances and pilgrimages - had it proposed merely sensual rewards - we should not then think it strange if a rational being should disregard and neglect such a Gospel. But how contrary to all this is the Gospel of Christ! It exhibits a God of boundless compassion holding out a proclamation of pardon to those rebels who lay under his curse - nay it not only proclaims pardon but it exhibits God reaching out his almighty arm to draw these rebels from their prison. Man stands upon the brink of hell with his eyes closed and the Gospel is sent to warn him of his danger to open his eyes and to take him by the hand and lead him to heaven. It holds out salvation as a free gift purchased by the blood of the Son of God. And now man has nothing to do but to lay hold of the cross of Christ and he will surely be carried up to heaven. But if he will not seize upon this anchor he inevitably sinks into everlasting burnings.

And now my hearers what success has this Gospel met in the world? There have been many there have been thousands who have devoted their lives to the work of urging them to accept of it and be saved. And yet though the world itself the world itself would scarcely contain the books and sermons that have been written and preached on the subject during the last 1800 years yet in every age the church has consisted only of a very few - while the great the overwhelming majority have disregarded or despised the Gospel of Christ. If you do not regard this fact as proving men to be in a state of spiritual death account for the phenomena if you can. But depend upon it you will search heaven and earth in vain for any other explanation.

But my hearers let us bring this experiment this argument nearer home. Let us bring it within these walls. Yes we call these walls to witness that here the Gospel of Christ has been praised for more than half a century. We call them to witness that many of you have heard from this pulpit Sabbath after Sabbath month after month and year after year the calls and invitations the doctrines and precepts the promises and threatenings of the Gospel - that here you have had life and death set before you - that

here the character of God and the character of man the requirements of God the duties of man have been exhibited that here you have been exhorted to repent and forsake your sins and make you a new heart and embrace Jesus Christ by faith. And now what has been the effect of all these appeals to your understandings and hearts and consciences? We will not doubt but that some of you have been in ordered to flee from the wrath to come. But let me ask with an earnest solicitude do not many of you remain unaffected by all these addresses we have made to you in the name of God? Have not many remained as insensible under our ministrations as if we had called upon the dead who sleep in their graves beneath the walls of this church? Are you not as far from the possession of religion as if you had never heard its invitations. And permit me to ask is there not a sleep upon your souls so deep and so lasting that it may wiser be called a spiritual death? For what else death could resist for so long the awakening calls of the Gospel? We speak not here of the manner of our preaching: for however feeble and imperfect that may have been: yet is the very subject itself proposed in ever so homely a dress enough to stir up all the energies of any being who is not sunken in a slumber deep as the grave? Why is it then that our voices have been sounding for so long a period with little more effect than if they had been sounded over a graveyard? Shall we say it is because you are dead in trespasses and sins? We do not say it - but yet what else can it be? O (in the name of God) by the value of your undying souls I beseech you let these questions into your consciences.

The last evidence we shall mention that by nature we are Spiritually dead is the stupidity of Christians.

If religion be indeed so invaluable a treasure if with it man is *joint heir with Christ to an inheritance incorruptible undefiled and unfading* and if without it he lies under the wrath and curse of God which will follow him and lie heavy upon him forever - then we say how can the man who possesses this religion remain unmoved by all its glorious hopes and promises how can he be insensible to the condition of those who have it not - how can he fail to use every method within his power for bringing his religious fellow men to embrace a Saviour. And yet is it not the fact that the great majority of Christians at least of professed Christians do not feel thus earnestly solicitous for the salvation of those around them with whom God is angry every day and upon whom the vials of his wrath are just ready to be poured out without mixture? Here then is a strong evidence that by nature men are spiritually dead. For if those who have tasted the Lord is glorious are so little affected with the dangers of their brethren and with their own glorious prospects it is a certain proof that they themselves are but a little way removed from a state of spiritual death.

But Christian brethren we will bring this argument also nearer home even within these walls. And here perhaps a false delicacy might urge me to pause but I should warn the feelings of many whom I esteem and respect and love: but no - away with all that delicacy which would draw a covering over the flames of hell which would not dare to tell the unregenerate man that he is treading over a lake of unquenchable fire. Look then around you and see how many of your companions neighbors and how many of your friends and how many of your children are in this very condition. How many are there whom you love as your own souls be because they are your children how many with whom you daily meet in the literary Social Circle and exchange the kind offices and intercourse of life - how many who have for years come with you to the same house of worship - how many whose amiableness and kindness you admire and love how many among these I say who with all their interesting qualities give no evidence that they are born of God on whom the preaching of the Gospel has had no abiding influence and who as you see them drop one after another into the grave you are compelled to believe must go down to a world of utter hopelessness and despair! And now Christians what have you done to snatch these immortal souls from that precipice on which they stand? God has appointed you to be the instruments of their salvation. But he will enquired of to do this for them. And have you prayed for them

as earnestly and effectually as you might? Have you warned them as you ought? Have you exhorted them as you ought? Why then are they not brought into the fold of Christ? We know that the Spirit is always willing and that God is more ready to bestow his grace than men are to ask it. It must then be because Christians are not more faithful and thorough in their prayers and admonitions of expectations that so many among us are crowding the broad road of destruction. For experience shows that whenever the children of God are thus stirred up the Spirit of God is uniformly poured out upon the impenitent. What reason then have we my brethren in this place to hope that our friends and neighbors will be converted which there is such a death like insensibility among us towards their danger such a lukewarmness in our prayers and such a slothfulness in our exertions!

And what a conclusive argument does this low state of religious feeling and action among us afford. Shall I say that Christian professors are Spiritually dead? Rather would I say it is a proof how smothered and quenched is the spark of holiness within them by the remaining body of sin and death. And yet once more do we call upon you to look around you and see how many of your dearest friends are living under the wrath and curse of God. Are they not in relation to God all dead men? And how shall the bonds of death be unloosed unless by the Spirit of God through your prayers and exhortations? O by your love to these immortal souls - by the mercies of your God and Redeemer - by the bowels of Christian benevolence - and by the vows of this Lord that are upon you have pity have pity upon these your friends and neighbors and children who without a change of heart must be forever miserable. Brethren it is high time to awake out of sleep - it is high time because it will soon be too late to intercede for those around you who are dead in trespasses and sins. For soon will you be removed beyond the regions of prayer and they will be removed beyond the regions of Mercy. And this reflection leads to another solemn thought. On our communion Sabbath how few of the children appear with their parents at the table of the Lord! Yet these gray headed professors are sinking one after another into the grave; but no son comes forward to take the place of his father no daughter to take the place of her mother. A little time and these fathers and mothers will all have passed into eternity. And then who shall stand up in this place for the Lord? Who will be left even to tell the melancholy story of our much loved Zion and drop a tear of pious sorrow over her desolate ruins?

Delivered

At Conway July 22 1821

At Amherst College Nov. 1832

## Sermon 63 Repentance

[Sermon No. 63, "Repentance," Luke 13:3, 1821 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 9]

Luke 18:3

*Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.*

Here is an article of faith and an article of practice proposed to us which we fearlessly set down as essential to salvation. Whatever man who profess to receive the bible as a mediation from heaven may believe concerning other articles supposed some to be therein contained they cannot hesitate to regard in words at least repentance towards God as absolutely necessary to secure his favor. For here we have the doctrine from the mouth of Christ himself delivered with a plainness no man can obscure and with an emphasis that must mark every conscience. Christ had just finished a long discourse to his disciples and the multitude. *And there were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you nay, but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* Whoever these persons were they doubtless were conscience smitten by the awakening discourse they had just heard Christ deliver and thus directing his attention to these Galileans they endeavored to diminish their own sins which were less enormous. But Christ instantly stripped away this delusion with an alarming application replied to them as above. And to give his doctrine a deeper hold on their consciences he proceeds with the following addition and repetition - *On these eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and these them think ye that they were sinners alone all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay: but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* Thus did Christ couple these self - righteous pretenders who strove to exculpate themselves from blame merely because there were some other men in the world who were worse - these did he couple with this vilest offenders. Plainly declaring to them that all who did nothing did not repent of their sins reviewed by us righteous God as essentially the same because all were stamped with an order defection from the love and service of God.

If then the doctrine of repentance be universally acknowledged by all professed believers of the Bible – nay more by infidels themselves to be the very corner stone of every man's religion we hope that we shall obtain of you my audience a hearing while we attempt to enforce the words of Christ we have chosen for a text. For coming before you as we do with a doctrine which you believe equally with ourselves we need not spend a moment in proving its truth. Yet it may be well before we present the motives before you to an immediate repentance to explain the nature of repentance or in other words to show what is implied in that godly sorrow which Paul says, *worketh repentance unto life.*

In a general sense repentance signifies a real and genuine sorrow for sin. Yet as this sorrow may arise from a variety of causes and produce totally different effects the one of which says Paul is death and the other life it will be necessary to state some discriminating marks by which godly sorrow may be known from that of the world.

And first evangelical repentance implies just views of sin.

There are those among men whom Solomon calls, *fools who make mock at sin*, regarding it in the light of infirmity. But the greater part of men when asked will confess that sin is offensive to God. But still these views are shall I not say infinitely below the truth? They do not feel this to be, *an evil and a bitter thing that they have forsaken the Lord their God*.

But the true penitent no longer sleeps over such false hopes and views. Sin rises in enormity of magnitude in an accelerated proportion now that he is brought by Spirit of God to see against how holy and merciful a Being he has transgressed and how he has resisted, *line upon line and precept upon precept*. Nay more how he has resisted all the kindness that has been displayed to him by his long-suffering Father in heaven. And as he resolves this subject in his mind he is led at length to regard the least offense of his life as rising on the scale of moral turpitude till no numbers can estimate it and he is led to enquire with the Temanite of old - *Is not my wickedness great and mine iniquities infinite?*

But there is such a thing as a man having a distressing sense of sin and yet having no godly sorrow for it. In such a case the person is alarmed chiefly at the consequences of sin upon himself in the world of unquenchable fire. But the true penitent looks upon sin in itself an evil of untold magnitude. He regards its nature with a reference to the character of God and he cannot conceive why anything that is opposed to infinite purity should not be infinitely vile and why anything that thwarts the designs of infinite benevolence should not be disserving of eternal wrath. That such a thing as this is sin and therefore does this man now that he is taught of God fear to limit the evil of sin. And when he looks to its actual efforts upon devils and men and his own soul he finds this view of the subject substantiated.

The second thing implied in evangelical repentance is hatred of sin.

It is impossible that a man may hate sin merely because it is likely to involve him in future punishment. Let the penalty answered to its commission be taken away and perhaps he may love it. But the reverse is the fact with the real penitent. He hates sin for its very nature so that if there were no heaven nor hell still could he feel towards it an unconquerable aversion. And for this Judaic reason it is opposed to his taste. He dislikes it for the same reason a man does some kinds of food. He has acquired a relish holiness which is contrary to sin and to be pleased with both at the same time would be a contradiction.

Again the real penitent will hate sin because it is an injury done to God for whose character he has now a reverence and love. The purposes of that God appear to him to be alone productive of all the happiness of the Universe and he cannot therefore avoid feeling a settled aversion towards that which throws a bar in the way of a full accomplishment of the denying of infinite benevolence.

A hatred of sin will also be experienced by the real penitent on account of its effects. Now will all his better feelings rise up in opposition to that deadly evil which rendered it necessary for the Word of God to become incarnate - to suffer the protracted malice of man - the temptations and assaults of devils and to feel in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross the intolerable curse of a broken law! And then when he looks at the stubborn and unprovoked malice of Satan and his angels manifested in his seduction of our first parents and in his unwearied efforts to distress the Saints and delude the sinners into the everlasting fire how will he loathe those abandoned outcasts who so far as he knows first made a break in a universe of happiness and introduced a confusion and distress which eternity will not see removed. When he looks on the world around him also and sees the wide wasting hand of sin and how it has enslaved the immortal mind of man and filled the earth with sighs and tears what desolation has been made by sin in that once beautiful habitation where but for this the image of the love of God might



have rested forever. O there will be awakened in the in the penitent breast an unconquerable hatred to sin in devils and men - on earth and in hell.

A third thing implied in genuine repentance is a full and free confession of sin before God.

Never was there a more humble and sincere penitent than David when he perused the 51st Psalm and before God he exclaims, *acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me*. Job too when humbled at last by the power of God and made to see his sins and corruption cried out, *I have heard of thee by the hearings of the ear but now my eyes seeth them. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes*. Nehemiah also and the other captives who returned from Babylon devoted one fourth of the day to the confession of their sins and they said, *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us: for more hast done right but we have done wickedly*. Whoever therefore when burdened with a sense of his sins finds within him no disposition to confess his transgressions before God if he is rather disposed to flee from him, he may justly conclude that his repentance is that of the *world which will wake death*.

The fourth thing implied in genuine repentance is a reformation of the conduct.

It was the universal language of Christ and the Apostles repent and bring forth works meet for repentance. That is to say if you repent and then stop - if you do not abandon those evil courses over which you mourn your repentance is merely superficial. There may indeed be a sorrow for a particular sin but unless a decided effort be made at the same time unless for a reformation the penitent arouse like an armed man and cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye which has offended he evinces that he is answering not for sin itself but merely for its consequences and that his sorrow is not deep enough to answer any other purpose than to seal up his eyes in a slumber which nothing but a miracle can break.

And it is the permanence my hearers it is the continuance month after month and year after year of those reformations begun in seasons of justice penitence that can alone prove us to be genuine followers of Christ. Every other proof of true repentance may fail us because there is a counterfeit penitence so nearly resembling the truth. But thus if it be attended with the same aversion toward sin we had in the beginning or rather with an increasing hatred of it furnishes a proof that will support us on a dying bed. We tremble therefore for the man whose repentance is only of a few days or weeks spanning - especially do we shudder for the fate of him who has put off the work till he is upon the bed of death - because he cannot have in this world any decisive evidence his sorrow for sin was not merely the sorrow of a Judas. And should he open his eyes in eternity and find this to be the case we ask you where is his remedy or his refuge?

Such are the distinguishing marks of that repentance which Christ calls upon every one of us in the text to exercise. Yes he calls upon every one of us my hearers who are now in this house of God to mourn over our sins this moment. And to neglect of this command there is a penalty annexed whose tremendous import the racking agonies of eternal fire can alone disclose. Can we not then my fellow sinners find some motives to persuade you to an immediate and thorough repentance?

In the first place what think you of the fact that repentance is solemnly and repeatedly commanded by God?

God says this the Apostle, *now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? Saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live? As*

*I live saith the Lord God I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die? Come now and let us reason together saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like Crimson they shall be as wool.* And what think you my hearers of such reasoning as this - and of such commands as these?

We might multiply the like extension exhortations from Scripture till the setting sun but would this persuade you to repent? Yes we repeat it does the solemn and reiterated command of the God who made you and, *who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell* - move you to repent. Do you not hear those commands and expectations and threatenings with as much concern as if they were mere idle tales?

Secondly - we ask you what think you of this motive? That without repentance your heaven will inevitably be lost.

*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* And repentance is just as necessary to go before holiness as the heat of summer is for the production of the first of the fruit of the earth. There is my hearers but one straight and narrow path to heaven for the rich and the poor the learned and unlearned - and in the very commencement of this path lies repentance. So that if a man refuse to submit to this depend upon it he is not in the road to happiness. For God has guarded it by a double flaming sword against all the those who have not turned unto him with all their hearts and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning. *The sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit: a broken and contrite heart. O God thou wilt not despise.* But the unbroken and unhumbled heart he will despise - and heaven will certainly be forever shut against the man who has not sorrowed after a godly manner for his sins.

Thirdly what think you of this motive that without repentance hell will infallibly be your portion.

We might soften this language and tell you that without repentance you are in danger of future misery. But why should we not speak plainly? If you are not prepared for heaven by repentance and if no man will ever enter there without repentance where do you expect to go if it not be a companion of the undying worm and a sufferer in the unquenchable fire? We long O impenitent sinner to tear away every thing that conceals that bottomless gulf and we long to direct your eyes steadily into its fiery cavern while yet you stand upon the world of hope. Once more then do I say to you with a solemn conviction of its truth that, *except ye repent ye shall all perish.*

We derive a fourth motive for immediate repentance from the fact that the works tomorrow will be more difficult than today.

If the *path of the just be like the dawning light that shines more and more unto perfect day* - on the other hand the path of the impenitent is like the evening twilight which lessens and lessens until it becomes perfect night. That is if Christians gradually progress in holiness - sinners gradually progress in wickedness. From the very nature of man - from the nature of habit there never was and there never can be any stationary point in a man's moral feelings. If he is not becoming better he is becoming worse. Apply this illustration to the case under consideration. A man neglects repentance until the morrow. In the meantime his habits become more firmly fixed and his sins become stronger. His habit has been to live impenitent and to overcome this a stronger effort will therefore be necessary tomorrow than today. Whereas the disposition to attend to it then will also be less and less. Under the circumstances what reason has a man to expect that he shall repent tomorrow unless God pour out upon him a more

powerful influence by his Spirit? And is it a reason to presume that this will be the case because the man has resisted and slighted his influences today? Look at this subject my hearers in any light and you will find the conclusion forced upon you from every side that your insensibility and slavery to sin will be deeper tomorrow than it is today and that therefore there is a less probability that you will then repent. And yet this consideration does not alarm you.

A fifth motive urging men to repentance today is the fact that tomorrow it may be impossible.

This impossibility may arise in two ways. First you may not be in a world of repentance tomorrow. *There is no work nor knowledge nor wisdom nor device in the grave whither thou goest.* And is it certain that you will not like a multitude of those before you be called ere another another morning sun shall shine upon you into eternity? Hast thou made a covenant with death? *O your covenant with death shall be disannulled and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through there shall ye be trodden down by it.* And what if it should pass through this night and you should awake not in a world of hope but in a world of despair? We tremble for the man who suspends his happiness on so brittle a thread as human life.

The second because that may render repentance tomorrow impossible is the fact that ere that time God may withdraw from you his Spirit. And why indeed should he not do this? What have you done impenitent sinner what have you done to retain his influences? Have you submitted to them or slighted them? Alas does not the fact that you remain impenitent show that you have always resisted the Holy Ghost? And yet you do not fear that His patience is exhausted and that the irrevocable sentence has gone forth against you. *Let him alone he is joined to his idols.* But what if indeed this should now be your condition? What if heaven were now to be opened and you should see the recording angel writing down that decree against yourself? Thank you that you should ever after have any godly sorrow for sin? Do you not know that Christ was exalted to give repentance and that without the Holy Spirit your heart will never feel anything unless it be the undying worm of despair? And yet if the close of day sees you impenitent you have certainly good reason to fear that another morning the Spirit of God will have withdrawn forever.

These in brief are the motives that urge men to immediate repentance. But we cannot dismiss the subject without a few remarks suggested by it.

And first every Being and event in the Universe calls upon men to repent.

The heavens above us and the earth beneath us and all the various animals in the air the water the ground serve to manifest the astonishing wisdom and benevolence of God and therefore do all these things exhibit the ingratitude of man in sinning against such a Being without contrition. Every event with which we are acquainted addresses to us directly or indirectly a call to repentance. Is it what we call a prosperous event? Surely the goodness of God to lead us to repentance. Is it what we call an adverse event? What louder call can a man have to humble himself before God than when he is rebuked by him? Holy angels also call aloud upon men to repent. For their sinless characters furnish such a contrast to our sinful ones that it exhibits in a striking light the bitter evil of sin. Devils too impenitent and obdurate as they are under the wrath of God address to man an awakening exhortation to repentance. For their example shows us precisely what will be our characters and sufferings a few thousand years hence if we do not humble ourselves and weep over our sins.

Yet secondly notwithstanding this universal call how many of mankind will remain deaf to it and risk

eternity impenitent?

After so many awakening addresses and motives have been and continually are addressed to man from God and Christ and the universe - nothing but the melancholy fact would persuade us that they could resist them. But what shall we say to the distressing truth that thousands every year on their dying beds confess that they are strangers to repentance! And this too even in a Christian lands where the Scriptures are in every one's hand and whence from Sabbath the Sabbath the call to repentance is sounded from the pulpit. Where indeed is that congregation to be found in which the very many do not remain unconcerned about their eternal destiny. And what an heart rending thought is it that some of those now hear me will live and die without repentance! And yet is not this as probable as anything else that is not capable of demonstration? For as I said before where is that congregation in which there are not many who live and die impenitent? If then the case be different with this assembly it must be the result of a miracle and a miracle we have no right to expect. Yes dreadful as is the thought we have no reason to doubt but that a part of this audience notwithstanding the calls of God and Christ and the services to repentance will live and die impenitent. Would to God this thought might arouse us to enquire as did the disciples of Christ when he told them that, *One of them should betray him. Lord is it I?* O that the voice of the archangel and the trump of God might be sounded in this assembly to call you to repentance ere it sound over your graves to call you to the judgment.

In the last place can Christians take this view of the subject without weeping and praying over the impenitent? If it be true, would to God it were not true, but there are some in this house who will resist every call to repentance made by God or man even till they lie upon a bed of death. O Christian you need not look beyond your own neighborhood to find the most pitiable objects of compassion. And be assured that if there is a spark of true religion in your hearts you will feel for them – Be insured also that your tears if they be sincere will not be vain and your prayers if they be fervent and effectual will be heard in heaven and answered. If there be some who will withstand forever the stirrings of God's Spirit there are others in the same impenitent state who will at last yield. O weep for them who never weep for themselves. O pray for these who never pray for themselves and God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth - and you a reward unspeakable and full of glory.

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At Williamsburg July 1822



## Sermon 64 Efficacy of Prayer

[Sermon No. 64, "Efficacy of Prayer," James 5:16, 1821 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 9]

James 5:16

*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

It must have afforded peculiar delight to the Church of God in primitive times to have been assured by an Apostle that their fervent and effectual prayers availed much. Living among those who regarded them as the filth and offscouring of the earth what a consolation to know that through prayer God would protect and comfort them. Living in the midst of a world lying in wickedness what an animating thought was it that they had within their hands an engine more powerful than all civil or philosophical institutions in the world for arresting the stream of corruption. And that they had only to go into the their closets and there offer the fervent effectual prayer and an influence would be drawn down from heaven that would bring sinners around them out of their double darkness and translate them into the kingdom of Christ.

And is not this same promise thus consoling and animating to the children of God? The offense of the cross has not yet ceased. And still is it true in an extreme view that *not many wise men after the flesh not many mighty not many noble are called*. Still it is in some sense true that they *who live godly in Christ Jesus suffer persecution*. And still is there the slumber of Spiritual death upon the eyes of millions so that without exaggeration it may still be said that the world lieth in wickedness. The Christian therefore needs and the devoted Christian realizes the promise of the text. And it was in the days of the Apostle so now we believe there are many fervent effectual prayers that avail much.

We propose at this time to show in what sense prayer does avail much - in other words to show the efficacy of prayer.

And first prayer has a most salutary influence on the heart of him who practices it.

Let us suppose a man who believes in the existence and attributes of God to kneel down before him in prayer. If he sincerely kneel there he must be solemn. There is no such thing as looking up and addressing holy almighty heart searching jealous God without feeling a reverence - a godly fear even if we are not Christians. Every thing indeed in his character and in our own - and the object for which we come before him to beseech mercy and forgiveness and deliverance from eternal miseries all these things conspire to produce a solemnity not to be found in any other transaction of life. And what state of mind can be more favorable than this to our eternal interests? The unholy passions within us are now calmed and and we can look at the character of God and the character of man without anything to warp the judgment and consequently see them in their true colors. Whereas amid the hurry and perturbations of the world if we look at these subjects and all it is through a preventing medium and the influence of such a view is too slight to awaken our exertions.

Prayer also tends to enlighten and quicken the conscience and plainly because we then see the

character of God and our own in a clear light. The eyes of the understanding are then almost inevitably opened and this is the very avenue to the conscience. Some men for instance will attempt to justify themselves in conversation for a habit of gaming – or of a debauched life or for a break of the sabbath or for their neglect of religion. Yet we challenge any such men to go into their closets and kneeling before God to present these petitions. O God grant thy blessing upon the game of cards I am about to play! O God be with me and bless me in the drinking frolick I am engaging in! O God sanctify to me this day my violations of the sabbath which are necessary! O God bless to me my neglect and of thy holy word and of the religion of Christ! Now the reasons that men cannot present such petitions before God which they will justify themselves to man is because conscience is awakened like an armed man wherever a person seriously attempts to pray.

Another salutary influence of prayer is that it teaches us our dependence upon God.

The very fact that we come to supplicate the mercy and blessings of God will show us inevitably that this is the source from which alone we can receive those favors. And we cannot call to mind a single thing which we possess that did not come from God. A sense of unworthiness to receive these gifts from God will also unavoidably go along with a sense of dependance and thus will a proper state of mind be produced within us for the reception of God's mercies we mean a state when we realize that very good gift and very perfect gift is from above and that they are bestowed through to sovereign mercy. In a most special manner it would seem that a man bowing before such an holy and Almighty God must feel deeply that all spiritual blessings must flow to him from heaven or he must forever remain without God and without hope.

It may be well to mention another influence of prayer upon unregenerated persons who practice it - and that is it teaches them that so long as they continue in a state of unregeneracy see they cannot pray in the manner and with the feelings required by God.

Such men in general indeed very rarely pray - certainly not in their closets. Yet before making the attempt in earnest they perhaps universally believe that they can pray in a manner satisfactory to themselves and acceptable to God. And when they are afflicted with their sinfulness at length and with a solemn concern for their eternal destiny they always pray. Indeed in such a state of mind it is impossible to prevent them attempting this. Yet amid all the anxiety and nervousness of awakened sinners to pray they soon begin to doubt their own ability to pray as they ought and soon to believe firmly that their prayers are wholly destitute of evangelical worth. Such a mortifying lesson as this usually brings down the proud heart of the converted sinner into the dust to realize his absolute dependance on the righteousness of Christ if he is ever saved. And this state of mind state rarely acquired in any other way is that in which God usually sheds down a regenerating grace. The utter helplessness of his condition is thus discovered to him and he is brought to lie at the feet of sovereign mercy.

We proceed to consider a second mode in which effectual fervent prayer availeth much and that is its efficacy in processing blessings from God. That God does actually answer such prayers by the bestowal of some good temporal and spiritual we shall now endeavor to prove.

Prayer as has already been shown produces in men that humble dependent state of mind which it is proper for him to possess under the reception of mercy. And it would appear rational to suppose that God would be more likely to confer blessings upon the man who is humble and thankful than upon him who is proud and ungrateful. Yet it is sometimes objected to this view of the subject that it is absurd to suppose that the petitions or feelings of a creature so magnificent as man should change the councils of

the Almighty and Omniscient God, *with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning*. But the prophet Daniel that emphatically prayerful man did not look upon this difficulty as any obstruction to prayer. During the Babylonian captivity we find him thus speaking – *In the first year of his (Darius') reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes*. Here we perceive that though Daniel knew the exact year in which the captivity would terminate yet he set himself forthwith earnestly to pray for it. Doubtless he looked upon prayer as every man ought to regard it as the appointed means by which that event would be brought about and that if God had determined to release the Jews he had also determined that their prayers should be the instrument. And just so is it in regard to every answer we receive to prayer. If it be already determined in the divine council to bestow certain blessings upon any man it may be determined also with equal certainty that they shall be prayed for so that the prayers that are offered may still be said to be the means through which the blessings are obtained while the council of God is not thereby changed.

Having thus shown as we trust that the degree of God is no objection to prayer we proceed to the proof that God does actually bestow mercies upon men in answer to their effectual fervent prayers. And the difficulty in this case lies not in the want of texts in the scripture to establish the point but among so many to make a selection.

Christ in his inimitable sermon on the mount introduces this subject and says *Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh fineth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him*. This passage is not only proof of the principle we have advanced but furnishes the most animating encouragement to Christians to be instant in prayer. And the like unlimited promise of answering prayer was repeated again and again by Christ as you doubtless recollect. *Vanity vanity*, says he to his disciples. *I ask unto you that whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it to you. And he spake a parable unto them to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint*. The parable is that of the unjust judge and the poor widow interceding with him and Christ's conclusion is - *and shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him though he bear long with them. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily*. To this we might add the example of Christ in regard to prayer how he often spent the whole night engaged in it - and the exultations and example of Paul and also the declaration of Jehovah by Isaiah - *I said not to the seed of Jacob seek ye my face in vain*. And when God communicated to Ezekiel the glorious things that would happen to the Jews in future times he adds, *yet for all this I will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them*.

But we leave this point which very few will dispute and proceed to state as a third mode in which the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous avail much that when the request be such as is not derogatory to the will of God nor injurious to man he will bestow upon the asker that very thing for which he prays. Is not this principle implied in the declaration of Christ to his disciples, *And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing you shall receive*. Indeed this expression is more unlimited than the statement we have made and seems to imply that Christians might obtain any mercy of God they should ask for – though perhaps it might properly be said that the word believing implies that the exceptions above named since it would not - be possible for a Christian to believe that God would grant anything inconsistent with his own glory or the good of his creatures.

This same promise so unlimited and encouraging was made by Christ to his disciples on several



occasions. But the one to which we would particularly direct your attention at this time is that in Matthew the 18th chapter: *Verily I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* If this promise does not establish the position that Christians may expect to obtain from the specified thing prayed for if it be not opposed to the glory of their God we know of no language that could do it and to confine the promise to the Apostles or to interpret it of special miracles is to take an unwarrantable liberty with the bible.

Numerous examples recorded in scripture prove that this promise has often been realized not only in a miraculous but in an ordinary way. In the chapter of our text James is urging the use of prayer for the afflicted and the sick and he quotes the example of Elias who says he was a man, *subject to like passions as we are and in he prays earnestly that it might not rain and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit.* The frequent deliverances of the Israelites through the prayers of Moses were also miraculous - as was also the lengthening of the life of Hezekiah fifteen years and the appearance of Gabriel to Daniel to explain his distressing vision - and the destruction of the Philistines in answer to the prayers of Samuel. But it does not appear to have been any thing miraculous in sparing Abimelech and his family for the sake of Abraham's prayers nor in forgiving the sin of Job's three friends through his prayer and their sacrifice - and how often do the Apostles acknowledge the blessings they have received in an ordinary way through prayer - and continually urge this duty upon their converts as if the very life of their souls depended on (*in pencil*: Answer to prayer in revivals especially in literary institutions).

But it is only an effectual fervent prayer that availed much - and what kind of prayer is that? Those unfeeling lifeless petitions which too many of us offer up in our closets which scarcely occupy our thoughts while delivering them, these are not fervent nor effectual prayers. Those which we present with an unforgiving temper or while our hearts are agitated with passion or occupied with worldly thoughts these are neither effectual nor fervent. But such a prayer is offered up when, *the Spirit itself makes intercessions for us with groaning that cannot be uttered.* Indeed to pray in the Holy Ghost and to pray an effectual fervent prayer is the same thing. The Spirit must move upon the heart of the Christian to produce in him holy affections and believing expectations that his petitions will be granted and to excite him to the use of all those means it may contribute to the same end.

But if an effectual fervent prayer can come only through the Spirit how are Christians to acquire his influences and how are they blamable if they remain forever destitute of them! Certain it is hearers that you will never gain the Spirit's influences of this kind so long as you do not wish them - nor make the attempt. So long as you remain satisfied with your present lifeless prayers to God never will you pray effectually and fervently. But is not God more ready to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him than earthly parents to give good gifts to their children? Where then is the difficulty? In your own heart Christian. And where is the blame if you have not a spirit of effectual fervent prayer? Where surely but in your negligence?

We close this discourse with a few inferences.

#### 1. What a mighty engine is prayer!

God has used this for establishing his church in the world from the beginning. And that surely must be a mighty instrument which can give success to a religion against which there is a triple league of the world the flesh and the powers of darkness all of whom *are exceedingly mad against it breathing forth against*

*it threatenings and slaughter.* And yet by the men of the world the idea that a few perhaps ignorant men calling themselves Christians can be kneeling down and calling for the assistance of an invisible God bring down from heaven and reforming and a renovating power that shall newly create their fellow man this is regarded by the irreligious is one of the wildest reveries of fanaticism. And yet many a rich many a powerful many a learned man has had a total change wrought in his feelings and views and actions through the secret prayers of those whom these very men perhaps have despised for their ignorance and ridiculed for their superstition. O what a struggle there must have been in the hearts of such men ere they have submitted! And how powerful must be those means through which such an energy of Almighty power is called forth! Yet that instrument is in the hearts of every Christian and it is merely effectual fervent prayer! O why do they not wield it more powerfully and successfully!

2. This subject shows us the folly and sin of those who neglect prayer.

Since the days of miracles there has been but one channel through which God communicates his mercies to man and that is by prayer. And if this can alone fit our hearts for receiving aright the mercies of heaven and if this be repeatedly commanded by God as the condition on which he will bless us is it not a gentle name to call that infatuation which neglects prayer folly. Is it not rather a blind madness? And what though we who neglect prayer may enjoy temporal mercies yet have we not every reason to fear that in more important concerns in our spiritual concerns God will leave us to leanness and ultimate death? If God pours out his fury upon the families that call not upon his name certainly he will upon individuals.

3. From the subject discussed we perceive that prayer in concert is peculiarly blessed.

We can not limit indeed the blessings God may grant to individual prayer: but when two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ he promises a peculiar presence in the midst of them as the text already adduced to show that the specified things prayed for will in general be granted to Christians limits the promise of social prayer - *Verily I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

4. This subject shows us that it is proper and important that Christians when two or three of them meet together should select some individual sinner and pray for him with strong crying in tears.

The text we have just repeated perfectly justifies and enforces this proceeding. And to pray for individuals appears from scripture to have been an Apostolic practice. Besides in our own times it has been ten thousand times blessed. In times of peculiar attention to religion among a people and one sinner after another is convicted and converted it has repeatedly been found after that those very persons had been the subjects of the united and fervent prayers of a few Christians.

And now Christian brethren what we want is that you should not stop with the mere acknowledgment of the correctness of this inference but that you should immediately and earnestly set about the practice of it. We want you not to make it a matter of ostentatious display and public conversation but whenever you meet with those of your Christian brethren who feel a love for the souls of their fellow men we want you should select someone of your families or acquaintance whom you have reason to believe does not love God and bring him in the arms of faith to the mercy seat of Jehovah and pray for his conversion again and again – and *God peradventure will give him repentance unto life.* But perhaps you reply that you cannot judge the heart and therefore cannot select any person to be the subject of your prayers because you know certainly not who are Christians and who are not. Suppose then that

you should happen to mistake and pray for the conversion of one who is already converted. Would it be an unpardonable crime to have besought God as it were in secret that he would render this man eternally happy? No - if he be indeed a believer he will bless you for your kind intention - and if he be unregenerate he will bless you when he is converted. Brethren do you desire that your pure and undefiled religion should be renewed among us? Then will you select and pray for individuals as well as for all these people. And you will not give over those prayers until those individuals are brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and him crucified. O how can you avoid such prayers when you for many a dear friend hardening his heart in sin and hurrying onwards to the judgment seat unprepared! How can you avoid these prayers when you remember that, *if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask it shall be done for them of your Father which is in heaven!*

Delivered

At Conway August 1821

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## Sermon 65 No Rest to the Wicked

[Sermon No. 65, "No Rest to the Wicked," Isaiah 57:20, 1821 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 10]

Isaiah 57:20

*The wicked are like the troubled sea when it can not rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

The Scriptures regard all mankind in relation to God as divided into two and only two great classes. On the one hand of those called the just - the righteous - the saints - the elect - the children of God - the regenerate - the sanctified - the converted - the apostate sons of God, etc., all which terms are synonymous. On the other hand are the ungodly - the unholy - the transgressors - the sinners - the wicked - the enemies of God, etc., and which terms are also synonymous. The characters and the destinies of these different classes likewise are as different as the names. The one are spoken of as having peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost - as being filled with the fullness of God - as dwelling in Christ and Christ in them - as being like Mt. Zion that cannot be removed but abideth forever - as joint heirs with Christ to an inheritance incompatible undefiled and that fadeth not away - as a *chosen generation a royal priesthood an holy nation a peculiar people*, and finally as destined to, *go into the presence of God where in fullness of joy and to his right hand where are pleasures forever more*. The other class she describes as being none of them righteous no not one - as dead in trespasses and sins as those with whom God is angry every day as by native children of wrath - as enemies to God - as loving darkness rather than light - as having *the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts evil and only evil continually*, as having hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked - as training up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and as destined finally to feel except they repent the gnawing of the undying worm and the flames of the unquenchable fire.

It is the latter class that is described in the text and they are here called wicked. By this term is already remarked is represented all who have not been regenerated however amiable and upright their characters and however orthodox their principles. And of all such the prophet says they, *are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest whose waters cast up mire and dirt*. We propose to assign at this time some of the reasons why such persons cannot rest.

The prophet certainly does not mean to say that unregenerate men enjoy no comfort in this world for this would be in the face of all experience. But he here compares them with the righteous and in this view indeed their unsatisfying transitory pleasures are scarcely worth naming. The sinners rest is but for a moment if he obtain any (and like the *laughter of the fool it is as the crackling of thorns under a pot*.) He enjoys none of that settled rest none of that serene satisfaction none of that unmoved firmness of soul which is the lot and the blessing and the joy of the Christian and which will abide and increase through eternity.

It is true that in God he *lives and moves and has his being* but this is a special and wonderful act of long-suffering mercy - and does not imply that God has any complacency or delight in his character. For between God and all sin there is a wide and impassable gulf and it is the abominable thing which his soul hateth. He cannot look upon it but with the abhorrence and all the tremendous and unalleviated threatenings he has thundered against is in the Bible evince how unchangeable deep and universal is his

hatred of sin. But the man of whom we are speaking being unregenerate is in a state of nature - in a state of sin and therefore having never been seen reconciled to God, God is not his friend.

How is it possible men should be at rest while a Being so great and good is utterly alienated from him and is continually frowning upon him and angry with him every day. This being is able to destroy both soul and body in hell holds this man's breath in his hands and yet he is not his friend. God cannot look upon him with any satisfaction or complacency. And what a state of racking uncertainty must that be in which this man lives. No wonder he is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. The only wonder is that he should continue in that state voluntarily and brave the thunders of Omnipotence.

The second cause why the wicked cannot rest is that Christ is not his friend.

Christ is styled the friend of sinners: but he is not their friend unless they put their trust in him. And to such he will prove a sure defense against the fury of that vengeance which will be displayed against him. And he is indeed the only defense in the universe. God is to the wicked a consuming fire and he will not regard any man with complacency or love who has not secured the protection and friendship of Christ. But this man of whom we speak has most surely never secured that protection or friendship: for he remains unregenerate and therefore, *an enemy of the cross of Christ*. This man thus has no friend in heaven to plead for him and to shield him from the drowning vengeance of an holy God. Why therefore should he rest in so unguarded friendless a state? Why should he not rather despair?

In the third place this wicked man cannot rest because the Holy Spirit is not his friend.

He is emphatically called the Comforter because it is through his friendly influence alone that men can obtain any true or permanent comfort. He it is that must give the new heart and prepare a man for the friendship of God and Christ. To be without his friendship therefore is to be left without one ray of comfort from anything beyond this perishing world. (O who can bear the idea that in the sacred Trinity he has no friend!)

But in the fourth place the wicked man is not only bereft of the friendship of Jehovah but he is actually and constantly an enemy to God.

*Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God says the voice of inspiration* - and to be a friend of the world is the very essence of an unconverted man's character. The carnal mind also says Paul, *is enmity against God*. And to have a carnal mind is the very essence of the unregenerate heart. Now a state of enmity implies a disposition to contend with Jehovah. (He presumes to send an arm of flesh to strive with omnipotence and thus bid defiance to the Lord God of hosts.) This language may sound harsh perhaps when applied to an amiable man who is unregenerate: but is it harsher than that used in the bible? Such a man God commands must peremptorily to annihilation. And there is no man who will not feel a distressing agitation when told by the voice of the Bible that in a few years or months or days all his comforts and all his hopes will be at an end - and that whether there be anything of misery for him in an untrodden eternity certain it is that there is nothing of happiness because he is not born again and therefore is never to see the kingdom of God. O no man we repeat it can look at a prospect so dark and cheerless without having his soul stirred up like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.

But when the unregenerate man in seasons of reflection perceives that his hopes and comforts are soon

to terminate he would be comparatively a happy man were it possible for his views to stop here. Yet he has often been told most solemnly and he can scarcely read a page of the bible without being reminded of the same truth that there is no middle state in eternity between perfect happiness and perfect misery and that if he is not saved and fitted for heaven, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*, his hopes and comforts will not merely terminate at death - they will be succeeded by a destruction no language can describe and by a series of miseries of which the great gnawing of an undying worm and the burning of unquenchable fire are faint emblems and whose duration eternity alone can measure. And here do we perceive an eighth cause why the wicked cannot rest. He fears eternal punishment. His views indeed of this subject are resting below the reality: otherwise they would arouse him to flee from the wrath to come. Still however when he reflects upon the subject and reads the scripture he knows that all *the wicked - that is all the unregenerate must be turned into hell* and as he is sensible that he has not been born of water in the Spirit he must perceive that this threatening includes himself.

And how it must harrow up all the fear and anguish of any person that is not insensible as death to see itself exposed to be plunged it knows not but the next moment into a lake of fire, *where the beast and the false prophets are to be tormented day and night forever and ever*. Did you ever see a man traveling carelessly on the very margin of a rocky precipice too high to measure and lined on its face with projecting crags? While at every few steps another person would spring from some covert endeavor to tumble him headlong? Then have you seen something that resembles the condition of the unconverted sinner treading carelessly on the very margins of hell whose bottomless caverns at every few steps disease and accidents starting from some ambush endeavor to precipitate him. And now the sinners foothold gives way and he beginning to sink is saved by some projecting crag or twig. Again he renews his foothold and again loses it and all this too on the very brink of hell and directly above the lakes of eternal fire. Can he rest in such a fearful jeopardy? *There is no peace saith my God to the wicked*.

We have now suggested some of the principal causes why the wicked or unregenerate man cannot rest. But there is a difficulty remaining than that is to make the unconverted man realize that he is destitute of the friendship of God and Christ and the Holy Spirit that he is the enemy of God and that he is under the influence of Satan. Opposed to all holy beings destitute of any hope or comfort beyond this world and a candidate for everlasting woe. That the man under genuine conviction for sin realizes all this yet he who is unawakened cries peace peace when there is no peace. And though he be in fact in this very condition and his heart like the troubled sea when its waters cat up mire and dirt - yet he is but slightly sensible of it because Satan deludes him into a belief that his state is much better than this and because he knows nothing of the holy calmness serenity peace and joy of the pious heart and therefore cannot form a comparison. Let us then take a brief review of the thoughts the feelings and the actions of a man who is unconverted and who in the text is said to have no rest because he has not any true rest. We shall say nothing here of the grosser vices which sometimes characterize the wicked - but only mention some thoughts and feelings and actions that are common to most men before regeneration. And yet we have not selected any individual as the pattern of this description except so far as our own experiences will carry us. Still would to God we might each one of us enquire, *Lord is it I?*

The unregenerate man walks in the morning and his first thoughts are occupied by some worldly object and do not rise in grateful acknowledgment to God for his preserving kindness. He soon begins to lay plans for the business of the day and is sagacious in adapting them so as shall promote most his temporal interest: but he does not enquire what shall I do this day for the glory of God - what shall I do for the advancement of my soul in holiness? Neither does the thought occur to him that the day now dawning upon him may be his last on earth and therefore it is wise to spend it as our last day should be

spent. As soon as this man has risen there is enough in the objects of time and sense about him and in his necessary cares effectually to keep out of his mind the subject of religion. It may be however that he is called (by a pious head of the family) to listen to the reading of the Scriptures and prayer - and though decency requires him to attend yet it is an irksome employment and if his thoughts are not wholly occupied by the world but are directed to the reading of the bible or the voice of prayer he spends his time in caviling against such a text or he smiles at such an expression and he rejoices when he is liberated from his confinement. During the day this man finds employment enough in worldly avocations to occupy his whole time. And when his thoughts and desires are not confined to his particular business his imagination is filled with low or trifling images and his heart with sensual desires. His thoughts during the whole day do not rise to God in prayer nor does he ever meditate upon the glories of his God and Redeemer or upon the joys of heaven or upon the holy scriptures or upon the means of advancing himself in holiness or extending the kingdom of Christ among his brethren. He sits down to the table loaded with God's bounty and rises from it without feeling his dependance and obligations. In vain and worldly conversation he is interested and feels little difficulty in listening to that which is vulgar if it be witty and even if it be such as casts an indirect ridicule upon religion or its professors he does not reprove it. Perhaps too he will converse upon religion so long as the subject is some abstruse point that has little bearing upon practice. But if he chance to fall into the company of those who are eminently pious in the subjects of practical religion are introduced you will perceive at once by the countenance and conduct of this man that he is uneasy and when they speak of being born again - of living by faith and prayers - of their struggles with sin - of the joys in God and Christ and of the advancement of Christ's kingdom, he feels rising within him a strong disgust and he finds that he is among a people of a strange language which he has never learnt. Especially is such a man disgusted and irritated if these devoted Christians should put any questions to him relating to the state of his own heart. He considers this as interfering with that in which they have no concern and indeed we believe that this unwillingness to be questioned concerning their religious state is almost universal among unrenewed man and therefore it may afford something of a criterion for determining whether they are in that state.

But to proceed with the man we have undertaken to describe. After the worldly cares and amusements of the day are over he retires to rest without offering up his acknowledgments to God certainly not in his closet and without reviewing his thoughts and feelings and actions of the day that is past. And this description of one day will answer for most other days - perhaps in seasons of sickness or sorrow he may for a time have more seriousness about him - but he soon returns to his wallowing in the mire of this world and thus quenches the Spirit.

But how can such a man worry through the Sabbath? If he live in a Gospel land he has become habituated to the services of that day so that he attends upon them as regularly as if they were his delight - and as to the truths he may hear from the pulpit he has become so accustomed to hear them and to be exhorted to repentance that they do not disturb his conscience any and therefore he does not object to hearing them. And when searching the scriptures also he never thinks of applying them to himself - or if such a man feel his opposition to religion rising more strongly he hears preaching with a doubting captious disposition and if he has discovered some defect in an argument some violation of good taste in the style or some excessive zeal in the preacher. This is enough to seal the conscience entirely against religious impressions. And as to prayer and self-examination on the Sabbath this man perhaps considers them proper but it may be he has known some professor of religion who for a pretense makes long prayers - and this instance of hypocrisy is enough to keep him in doubt all his days whether it is best to enter his closet and examine his heart and pray. Thus does he stumble over the faults of another first into even to scepticism - then into stupidity and then into hell.

Thus much for the life of the unregenerate man: but what is the character of his death? Here emphatically the wicked cannot rest. Approach him now and ask him if God and Christ and the Eternal Spirit are his friends and he will weep that he has no friends in heaven – ask him if he hearkens to an enemy of God - if the Prince of darkness has ever influenced him - if he has not hate and he will sigh a bitter affirmative holiness and all holy beings - asks him if his hopes are now at an end and he will answer you by a countenance full of despair - ask him if he fears the undying worm and the unquenchable fire and he will answer you by a countenance wild with delirium.

Thus essentially have millions lived thus have millions died. Like the troubled sea when it cannot rest casting up mire and dirt. Thus do we live thus shall we die if we remain in an unregenerate state. Are we then reconciled to God or are we his enemies? Have we been born again of water and the Spirit or are we still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity? resisting the Holy Spirit and treading underfoot the Son of God? Do we find the exercise of an unregenerate man as above described to resemble ours? And if our case be thus alarming - if we are still in our sins and under the wrath and curse of God do we mean to make any exertions for bettering our condition? Certainly our mere wishes never will be better it. We must arouse within unconquerable resolution and repent and pray God to send down into our proud hearts his almighty Spirit to humble them and subdue them. And if we must perish at last O let us perish with our faces in the dust and our arms stretched out towards the cross and crying, *thou Son of David have mercy on us.*

Delivered

At Conway August 1821

At Conway April 1824



## Sermon 66 Sinner's Plea of Inability

[Sermon No. 66, "Sinner's Plea of Inability," Isaiah 30:7, 1821 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 10]

Isaiah 30:7

*Their strength is to sit still.*

We are about to attack (attempting to expose) this afternoon a particular delusion in regard to religion which is very prevalent and very dangerous. Many are to be found who acquiesce in the doctrine of man's entire alienation of heart from God and who are ready to acknowledge because the doctrine seems taught in the Bible that by nature they are, *dead in trespasses and sins*. They believe too they be ever regenerate it must through the influences of the Holy Spirit. Viewing these his doctrines in connection with another fact that while they remain unregenerate neither their prayers nor doings are acceptable or pleasing to God they are our lead to the conclusion that they have nothing to do but be diligent in the use means. That is they do not feel that it is their duty to make themselves a new heart and love God supremely. God say they has appointed certain means of grace such as reading the Scripture attending upon religious meetings etc. and if we diligently use these means we may hope they will result in our conversion. Indeed if regeneration can come only from God and if he bestows renewing grace according to his sovereign will and not according to anything he discovers in us the conclusion is inevitable that it is entirely in vain for us to do anything but to use these means and to wait upon him for the influences of his Spirit. We have indeed an earnest desire to become religious: but since God must, *work in us to will and to do*, we must wait till it be his pleasure to convert us.

We are willing to believe that the men who use such reasoning are sincere in it. And the fact that they acknowledge even speculatively their lost alienated condition by nature and their entire dependance on God for regenerating grace is certainly much in their favor as it shows that their minds are prepared for receiving the Gospel (and there is more probability of their actually submitting their hearts to it – than of the man whose head as well as heart is erroneous). Still we are as certain as of any other fact that such persons are resting in a false and dangerous view of the subject. That man by nature is dreadfully alienated from God and that the sovereign grace of God can alone convert him we most decidedly maintain: but to infer from this that men have nothing to do but use the ordinary means of religion - that they must sit still until God please to regenerate them are inferences which the enemies of the doctrines of grace deduce from them but from which the friends of those doctrines should flee as from a dangerous delusion. We devote this discourse therefore to the subject and shall endeavor to prove that it is the duty of every man without a moments delay to make him a new heart and to love God with all his heart and mind and strength.

The text we have chosen it must be acknowledged had not originally the least reference to this subject. The prophet in the thirtieth chapter is warning the Jews not to trust in Egypt but in God and whether the text was meant to apply to the Israelites or the Egyptians is not certain. But we may be permitted by way of accommodation to apply it to this subject. Of those who use the reasoning above mentioned to justify themselves in not turning their hearts to love God we may say, *their strength is to sit still*. It is sitting still and waiting for the peace of God which they justify - it is while sitting still that they hope to

be converted. Here then is their strength. Let us see if their strength is not weakness.

In entering upon the subject we premise this principle that a just and merciful God would never impose laws upon his creatures which he had not given them powers to observe. We know of nothing that would exhibit God in a more arbitrary tyrannical and repulsive aspect than to describe him as commanding that which man could not perform. If for instance he had required (commanded) man to love him when this was a natural impossibility we could not look upon it but as (an arbitrary act of the most flagrant injustice). And this view of the subject is that given in Scripture. The Jews in the time of Ezekiel had charged God with dealing unjustly with them by causing them to bear the iniquity of their fathers. But Jehovah repels an assertion so repugnant to the glory of his character and condescends to reason with that rebellious notion and to promote them that the fault lay with themselves – *O house of Israel says God are not your ways equal?* And Christ in the parable of the talents condemns in the most pointed manner the man who charged his Lord with, *reaping where he had not sown and gathering where he had not strewn*. Indeed the principle that God will not require of any of his creatures to perform an impossibility is so evidently correct that no man on earth perhaps in so many words denies it.

Keeping this fundamental principle in mind then let us proceed to enquire whether God in commanding man to love him has actually demanded an impossibility. For if this be the case we do not probably understand aright this scriptural command as it means perhaps no more than those suppose who are waiting to be converted viz. that we are commanded to love God only on condition that his Spirit compels us to it. But let us see what powers God has actually given to all men and what motives for loving him he has set before them.

In the first place man is capable of distinguishing between moral excellence and moral deformity.

The foundation of this discernment lies in the conscience – a faculty given to all and whose decisions are so correct that it is often safer to trust to its dictate than to the clearest chain of argument. Indeed it is a common thing for one man to appeal to the conscience of another for the moral excellence or deformity of particular actions. Whatever be the actual conduct of men very few are so weak or so wicked as not to know what part of conduct is virtuous and what part vicious. Even heathen poet Horace says that he saw and approved those things that are excellent but followed those that are blamable. Men therefore are not prevented from loving God because they cannot discern good from evil (for it is most certain that in general they can distinguish the precious from the vile - the clean from the unclean.)

But in the second place I assert that man does actually esteem and approve of moral excellence in his fellow men.

Even those who have long worked wickedness greedily and who are abandoned to every evil work cannot approve and respect him whose disposition is thoroughly good whose honesty and integrity are pure and whose benevolence is constantly at work in relieving the wants of his fellow sinners. Milton very happily describes even the Devil and his angels as possessed of some degree of this feeling of respect for pure virtue. When the angels that guarded Paradise while yet our first parents were happy first discovered Satan lurking in that garden one of them severely rebuffed the fiend. And of him the poet says -

*His grave rebuke,  
Severe in youthful beauty, added grace.*

*Invincible: abashed the Devil stood,  
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw  
Virtue in her shape how lovely, saw, and pined his loss.*

*[Milton's Paradise Lost]*

And what an instance of the like him among men have you in the trembling of Felix before Paul, *reasoning of righteousness temperance and judgment to come* - although that Felix knew that he was unrighteous and intemperate and exposed to the tenors of the judgment yet did he feel such a severance for the holy man who could thus reason upon these things that he could not even reproach him much less punish him. And the same feeling is common among sinners of every generation. They cannot avoid having an esteem for the man who lives prayerfully and righteously although his life and conversation are a most pointed reproof of their conduct and feelings. Indeed men who are unholy themselves not only will suspect the man of moral excesses but when they feel his benevolence exerted toward themselves or their friend they cannot but feel grateful to such an one for those very virtues which pointedly reproach themselves. So powerful is the force of conscience and thus strong is the disposition in man to esteem and approve of moral worth.

Let us now suppose man to direct his attention to the moral character of God instead of his fellow men. If he saw some faint and imperfect traces of justice in his brother and respected it he now sees a God of perfect and eternal justice being no respecter of persons and rewarding every man according to his works. Why then should he not love such a God? If he saw a small degree of benevolence in man mixed with much selfishness and experienced some faint effects from it he now in the character of God discerns an infinite and unmixed benevolence. He views a Being who is emphatically called love - a Being whose deeds of kindness and mercy to man are without number and without measure - who has devised and executed the wonderful plan of redemption by sending the Son of his love to die for sinners - who sends down his Holy Spirit to strive with the whole human race - who has given his revelation a sign and a perfect guide to the sincere and humble enquirer - who has upheld our forfeited lives day after day and month after month while we were in a state of active rebellion against his authority. O how can the man who reverences and is ever grateful for the feeble benevolence of his fellow refuse his love to the Being in whose character this virtue shines forth in eternal perfection and unclouded glory - while at the same time this very man is feeling the full exercise for exercise of this benevolence upon himself?

[paragraph crossed out]

In the third place I maintained that there is no faculty wanting in man to enable him to love God - no change of faculties nor view ones conversion.

In the fourth place we remark that man neglect to love God not because there are not motives sufficiently powerful.

Is it not an insult to your understanding to present before you the inducement you have to give your hearts to your maker and Redeemer? For they are so obvious that nothing but the most blundering stupidity and deathlike apathy can be ignorant of them. And yet certain it is that the minister of Christ is obliged to hold up these motives again and again before men or they would never feel them. What think you then of being released from the everlasting curse and displeasure of an Almighty God? What think you of becoming a child of God instead of a servant of Satan? What think you of being made heir to an inheritance incorruptible undefiled and unfading? What think you are enjoying peace of conscience and

joy in the Holy Ghost unspeakable and full of glory? And what think you of exchanging the everlasting burnings of hell for the everlasting happiness of heaven – and the society of devils for that of angels and saints in light? Certain it is that this wonderful change in your condition and feelings and hopes will be made the moment you will consent to yield to God your supreme affections. These motives are all urged upon you again and again in the Scriptures and the God who cannot lie has most solemnly declared that they are real and that he is sincere in presenting them before you to urge you to escape from ruin. If then you resist these motives - if you do not submit to them this moment where is the fault with God because he does not force you by his Spirit to listen to them? Or with your own heart because it will not yield to their influence?

This question leads us in the fourth place to state the true cause why men do not love God - and it is simply and entirely because they have not any disposition for it.

This cause of their unregeneracy was assigned by Christ to the unbelieving Jews - *ye will not come to me that you might have life*. And we know not in what respect a Jewish opposer of God differed from a Gentile. The truth is men do not desire to love God. They doubtless desire happiness - especially everlasting happiness - but after all they have not a relish for that spiritual frame of mind - for that holy conversation and that spirit of devotion exist those self-imposed services which must exist with the love of God. Could they love God with nothing of these attending it - could they be made happy by a mere reverence for God's character - the kingdom of heaven would doubtless be full. But when men find the love of God implies an entire surrender of every thing they possess every thing they are to his service - when they find that they must travel for the time to come in a course directly contrary to that they have been in all their lives and that their views and aims and hopes must be entirely revolutionized and that they must take up the cross daily and follow Christ - when men take this view of the subject there is certainly no disposition within them to submit to it. They find that they have an immediate unwillingness in their hearts to engage in the work. And this unwillingness - this want of a disposition is the sum and substance of their inability to love God. Remove this and love would spring up spontaneously in every heart and men would all be righteous.

And now we wish solemnly to enquire of every unrenewed man whether the want of disposition be not the only thing that prevents his loving God? Have you not within you those powers that enable you to discern between sin and holiness? And do you not actually esteem and love moral excellence in your fellows? And are there not motives sufficiently powerful to persuade you to regard the character of God with supreme complacency? Where then is the obstruction but the want of a disposition?

And let me here also seriously enquire whether you will dare to allege at the bar of God as an excuse for not loving him that you had no disposition for it? Is it not the very highest and most unpardonable of all sins to lack this disposition when he has given you such powers and such motives for loving him? If you had neglected the support of your families and given as a reason the want of a disposition to support them - or had you neglected the education of your children and suffered them to grow up in idleness vice and ignorance and given as a reason the want of a disposition would men believe this to be any justification? If you had neglected to love your parents or friends and assigned does not the very essence of the sin lie in that want? And yet we challenge you to produce any other reason why you do not love God.

You will doubtless reply to all this by saying that you are born with the want of this disposition and that you cannot be blamed for any defect that is natural. But will this excuse you? You are born without any disposition to obey the laws of the land but will this justify you in breaking them? You are born without

any disposition to restrain your appetites and passions - but dare you alledge this is an excuse for indulging them to excess? You might do it with just as much force as to allege the lack of natural a natural disposition as a justification for neglecting to love God.

But we have another answer to the objection. God does in infinite compassion send down his Holy Spirit to strive with every unregenerate man and to warn him of his danger and that Spirit is ready to overcome his natural disinclination towards God. That God does thus strive with all man is evident from the promise of Christ that the Spirit should convince the world of sin of righteousness and judgment to come and also from the declaration of Christ that he stands at the door of the heart and knocks for admittance. And we do not hesitate to say that this Spirit has often striven with everyone in this house and that if we had not resisted that Spirit if they had not always resisted that Holy Ghost - they would not now have occasion to alledge that they want of a disposition for not loving God.

What then my hearers becomes of the boasted plea of your inability to repent and love God? When stripped of all its disguises it proves to consist wholly in the want of a disposition - a kind of inability which a person could be asked to mention even to man much more to God. But if there be any who still do not feel satisfied on this point but are prepared to ask many questions concerning it for such indeed for all others we have in the fifth place an argument that must stop the mouth of every objection and put an end to all caviling. It is an argument independant of all that has been said and will not be at all affected by what has been said. It is this - God does actively command men without any condition to love him supremely at this moment. He commands them at this moment to repent of their sins to exercise faith in Christ and to make them a new heart and a new Spirit.

It was the first great commandment that came forth from the thunderings of Sinai - *thou shalt have no other gods before me*. And Christ has repeated and explained this when he says, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment*. God says Paul, *now commanded all men everywhere to repent*. And God by Ezekiel says to the house of Israel, *cast away from you all your transgressions whereby you have transgressed and make you a new heart and a new Spirit: for why will ye die O house of Israel?*

These my hearers are the solemn commands of God and they are repeated again and again in every part of the bible. And not one place is there any illusion made to any impossibility of complying with them. They are as peremptory and unconditional as any commands can be. Now then we perceive there is a controversy between God and those who say that they cannot love him nor make themselves a new heart. For He commands them to exercise this love and they reply that this is impossible and that they are waiting for his grace to convert them. What is this but replying against God? *And who art thou that repliest against God?*

Here then my hearers the contest between you and me terminates. You assert that you cannot love God till he converts you. We bring forward the solemn command of God to give him your heart. If then he has commanded an impossibility the controversy over the subject lies not between you and me but between you and God. O see to it my hearers that this be terminated before the day of judgment. For however ingeniously you may now prove that you are under immediate obligations to love God because it is impossible - however clearly you may think you can see that you must wait for conversion in the diligent use of means - we greatly fear that those arguments will not avail you in the days of final account - and for this plain reason that we believe God would not command that now which you will not abide by in the day of final retribution. Thus far your strength has been to sit still. Now let your strength be shown by putting forth all your energies, *to work out your salvation with fear and trembling knowing*

*that it is God working in you both to will and to do.* If the man who had the withered hand had not attempted to stretch it out at the command of Christ it never would have been healed. So unless you attempt to love God and repent at his command depend upon it you will never be saved.

[Asterisk] \*

And it is indeed time that we are every one of us commanded to exercise supreme love to God before we leave this house? Most certainly - and we have witnessed the past week which a Providence that enforces this command with a powerful emphasis. This morning have I attended the funeral solemnities one who has was called in a moment from time into eternity. And for him to do we believe in Christ. It was a glorious exchange. But what if we go from this house a single step should carry us into the world of Spirit! O let us then resolve to give up our hearts to God this moment. This moment let us resolve to propose to meet our God. The next moment may be too late.

[Asterisk] \*

Let us for a moment suppose a case that may occur: alas I fear it will be realized by some who hear me in their own experience. Suppose an unconverted man to be brought upon a bed of dangerous sickness and to send for a clergyman. The minister learning from his physician that he cannot survive 24 hours. He's a sick man confesses that his heart has never been changed and acknowledges that it is so entirely depraved that nothing but sovereign grace can renew it. But says he I am a dying man and in a few hours my eternal state will be fixed. O what shall I do to be saved? *How can I dwell with the devouring fire? How can I inhabit everlasting burnings?* Now what shall the minister answer? Shall he tell that dying miserable man that he has nothing to do but to wait in the diligent use of means for the converting grace of God? O that would be an outrageous mockery of his misery. It would bring the blood of that man upon the minister's soul. Rather must he plainly and faithfully tell the dying man that he must repent and submit to God and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that very hour: and that he lies under no other inability to do this except the inability of a simple heart for which God will hold him guilty. And my hearers if it would not be proper to tell the sinner on the bed of death to wait for converting grace neither would it be proper to tell any other sinner to wait: for who knows how near death may be to any man? Who knows but by waiting even one hour he may seal his eternal doom. O there is not there cannot be any excuse for delaying to love God: and Satan never practices a deeper and more fatal delusion upon a man and when he persuades him that he has nothing to do but to wait in the use of means for renewing grace. For the longer he waits the more insensible will his heart and conscience become. The longer he waits the farther will God be removed from him. The longer he waits the fainter will be the prospect of his conversion. This is the delusion which more perhaps than any other in our land has sent souls silently and slowly but certainly to destruction. For until a man can be made to feel that he is under obligation to repent and love God at the present moment there is no hope - no hope - of his conversion. This is the last delusion which breaks away from the sinners mind. Ah, I fear it will never break away from the minds of many who hear me until conviction flashes upon them from the flames of the unquenchable fire.

Delivered

At Conway August 1821

At Amherst College March 13 1831

At Amherst College March 1835

At Amherst College March 1839

At Amherst West Parish February 1838

## Sermon 67 Preventatives of a Revival

[Sermon No. 67, "Preventatives of a Revival," James 5:16, 1821 Sep,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 10]

James 5:16

*Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that ye may be healed.*

*[Hitchcock seems to suggest that there is a spiritual disease in his church; see paragraph 5.]*

What is the reason Christian brethren that there is not a general revival of religion among us? Most certainly it is not because God is not willing and ready to bestow his Spirit. For Christ hath said, *If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Ask and it shall be given you - seek and ye shall find - knock and it shall be opened unto you.* Here then have you an absolute promise of the Holy Spirit if you ask it aright. Unless therefore you charge God with a lie you must conclude that if we do not have religious revival in our hearts is our own fault altogether. *We ask and receive not - because we ask amiss.*

But what do we mean by a revival of religion? We do not mean what many a man who is either opposed to such a work or misinformed on the subject attaches to the phrase. We don't not mean an enthusiastic excitement of the carnal passions – nor a mere awakening of the fears - not merely the strong wind nor the earthquake nor the fire. But we mean an actual increase of every Christian grace and of every good work among the children of God. We mean a period when through the greater exertions and more spiritual and fervent prayers of Christians the Spirit of God strives more powerfully with sinners around them - when a still small voice carries conviction to many a conscience - when the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in many a heart and unregenerate men are earnestly seeking and enquiring what they must do to be saved? We mean just what the prophet Habakkuk did when he prayed in view of the iniquities of Israel, *O Lord revive thy works in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known: in wrath remember mercy.*

And what is there objectionable in such a revival of religion? What is there that is not unreasonable? For if we allow that a man may be more engaged in religion at one time than another - if we allow the a Christian may be more faithful and earnest in prayer at one time than another and thus obtain a more important answer from God (and what rational man will not allow of all this) we must acknowledge that there can be such a thing as a revival of religion. Indeed the man who does not believe that the Spirit of God is at all necessary to render a person religious has every reason to believe in and encourage a revival. For he supposes that means are everything and therefore he might conclude that the more these were multiplied the more would religion prevail. And indeed it a first view it would seem that such a man would encourage the work of a revival with more ardor than those of us who believe that after all our prayers and efforts we are entirely dependant upon the sovereign mercy of God.

We now return to the enquiry that commenced this discourse - what is the reason Christian brethren that there is not at this time a general revival of religion in this place? The fault we have already seen lies with ourselves - that is with the professors of religion - and you will bear with me I trust while I



attempt plainly and solemnly to point out more particularly in what this fault consists. For the text directs us to confess our faults one to another and pray for one another that we may be healed - and we do believe most sincerely that it is high time our proud hearts were humbled to submit to this mortifying exhortation.

In giving an answer to the above enquiry we do not suppose that all the reasons we shall give why there is not a revival of religion will apply to every individual professor. Some of these may apply to one and some to another. Neither do we mean to attack the particular feelings of any individual. We take it for granted that this church is affected with some disease for otherwise religion would be revived among us. And now what we intend is to suggest some of the most probable causes why so many if not all of us are weak and sickly and why so many sleep.

And the first cause why religion is not revived universally among is probably that but few of us have recently been converted.

The word conversion in the scripture generally means the same as regeneration. But in a few instances it is used to describe that change a Christian experiences when he returns to God after a long season of backsliding and stupidity. Thus Christ says to Peter in view of his denial of his master – *When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren*. No one will doubt but that Peter was regenerated previous to this - and therefore by his conversion to Christ must have meant his recovery from his dreadful fall. Indeed an apostasy so great as that of Peter would probably demand as much repentance as much distress of mind and as deep conviction of sin as did his first conversion from the darkness of nature and therefore it might very hopefully be called a new conversion. Now when any Christian Church forgets its first love and becomes lukewarm conforming itself to the world it is necessary in order that it should be in a proper state for a revival that it should be converted in the same sense in which Peter was. The members of such a church must be convicted of sin and undergo a deep repentance and reform. *Remember therefore*, says Christ to the Ephesian church, *from whence thou art fallen; and repent and do the first works for else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place except thou repent*. And it is rational to suppose and facts show it to be the case that the person who undergoes this second conversion generally experiences as much distress of mind as much humbled and sometimes receives as much light as when first right regenerated. Indeed when the man who does really though faintly love God is made to realize after a long and dreadful apostasy how monstrous is his ingratitude he must be bowed down to the dust and feel that ingratitude more deeply than he who never has loved God at all however deep his convictions.

And now brethren this enquiring we have to make is whether we have recently experienced any thing of this new conversion – any thing of this awakening from spiritual sloth? That we have been in a state of very great stupidity in regard to the welfare of Zion probably none of us will deny. Or if we do deny it the fact that a general revival of religion does not exist among us proves it. To be recovered from such a state then we must pass through the process described by Christ, *remember from whence thou hast fallen and repent and do the first works*. Have we then my brethren experienced anything of all this of late? Individuals might perhaps reply in the affirmative - but as a church have we experienced it? We hesitate not to decide this question in the negative and we hesitate not to say also that until such be the case is idle to expect a general revival of pure and undefiled religion. For such a work we believe in almost every case God commences in the hearts of his children. Certainly on the day of Pentecost he poured out his Spirit upon the Christian band first and then upon his enemies. And that great revival means to be in most things a prototype of all others that are genuine.

I call on you therefore my brethren as well as upon myself to repent and do the first works - I call upon you in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ to humble yourself before God and to weep over the hardness of your hearts and the horrible ingratitude we are guilty of in departing from the living God and returning to our wallowing in the mire of this world after that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious. And I call upon you to awake now - because now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation. Tomorrow may be too late to be of the least service to your unregenerate child or neighbor who may ere that time be in eternity his blood lie upon your head forever and ever.

The second reason why religion is not generally revived among us is that professors of religion are not faithful in prayer.

It will be observed that in this discourse we speak of all professors as real Christians. And although we have great reason to fear, nay we cannot doubt that there are some who have taken the vows of the Lord upon them who have neither part nor lot in Christ yet so long as these continue external members of the church of Christ we are bound to regard them and address them as real believers for it is the prerogative of God only to judge the heart. On this principle therefore the terms professor and real believer are used in this discourse as synonymous. And when we say that a want of faithfulness in our prayers is one reason why God does not pour out his Spirit among us we mean not but that individuals may be faithful: but there is an unfaithfulness somewhere among us. But yet we have no evidence to produce on this subject except your own consciences. We appeal directly to them and enquire whether it be not true that you have not been as faithful as you ought to have been in the duty of prayer? Have you Christians entered your closet as often as your conscience tells you you ought to have done? Have you imitated and do you now imitate in this respect your divine Master who sometimes spent whole nights in secret prayer on the mountains? Have you wept in secret over sinners as he did in view of Jerusalem? Have you wrestled as did the Patriarch of old until the break of day and feel as if you could not depart without the blessing? How have you spent those seasons which we have agreed to devote to prayer for the influences of the Spirit - especially that hour set apart on the morning of this holy day? In short have you prayed as constantly and as earnestly for yourself as you would do if you knew each day were the last of your existence? Have you prayed for sinners as you would pray for them if you saw the heavens and this earth mingling in one mighty conflagration and the trumpet of God calling them unprepared to his tribunal? If you have done all this most surely you have been faithful in your prayers and I am faulty in charging unfaithfulness upon you. And most joyfully would I upon my knees crave your forgiveness if you will rise up and say that in this thing I have injured you. Alas I fear I shall have no occasion for repentance.

The third cause why a general revival of religion does not exist among us is that the prayers of Christians are hindered.

To multiply religious meetings for prayer and conference may have the appearance of a religious revival and excite in the minds of Christians raised expectations. But if believers carry to these meetings the same insensible heart they have carried into the sanctuary of God in a time of stupidity - if they do not come to them with broken and contrite spirits - if they do not bring along with them a more earnest desire than ever for the salvation of their fellow man - in vain and worsening vain is it to increase the number of meetings for prayer. For they excite expectations never to be realized besides provoking the Almighty to send down strong delusions in answer to such stupid and unfeeling supplications. There is such a thing as agonizing in prayer - when the petition is put up in such a manner and with such an ardor and intenseness of devotion as if the supplicant could not be denied. And something of this agonizing we believe always precedes a general revival of religion - either in the social meeting or in the closet. Is

there anything like this existing among us? We do not mean whether you could point to this man or that man and say we presume he agonizes in his closet - but we ask do you agonize? If not are not your prayers hindered? The first thing that may hinder them is an improper conformity to the world. Perhaps we are so engrossed by the accumulation of wealth by our farms and by our merchandise that there is very little difference in our conduct and conversation except in the performance of a few ceremonies and to distinguish us from those who are without hope. Indeed when such perceive that our affections are as much engrossed in pursuit of worldly riches or honors or pleasures as their own - when they perceive that our thoughts our conversations and our talents are occupied almost wholly in seeking to add treasure to treasure house to house and field to field - or for the praise of men more than the praise of God - why should not the irreligious man pointing the finger of scorn at us exclaim, *What do ye more than others?* Why should he not ridicule the evident inconsistency between our lives and our principles and exult in the consistency of his own? Why should he not tumble over us first into skepticism and then into hell?

The second thing that may hinder prayer is the habitual commission of known sin. And here let the enquiry we have come home solemnly to each one of our hearts - do not we indulge some evil propensity - some ungodly passion - some vile lust which we know to be contrary to the will of God? Or perhaps we indulge some one of these with the impression that they are failings and not real sins. O then Christians this is the accursed thing that separates between us and God. Our prayers offered under such circumstances are an abomination in the sight of God. This right hand had must be cut off - this right eye plucked out. Otherwise instead of a revival of religion we may expect to be cast into hell, *where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.*

The fourth cause that prevents a general revival of religion among us is that Christians are not faithful in exhorting and warning sinners.

If a man go into his closet and earnestly pray for the conversion of an individual he can hardly fail of feeling so much interest for his welfare that he will go to him and endeavour to show him his danger and his refuge. Indeed can be called a fervent or effectual prayer whose influence does not extend beyond the door where it is made? To converse with sinners individually then is the proof that we feel for them and pray sincerely for them. There is not a more powerful means of awakening the unregenerate than a solemn plain and affectionate personal enquiry of them by a Christian friend concerning the condition of their souls. And does that Christian then feel and pray for unregenerate men while he neglects the most powerful means God has put in his hands for their conversion?

But yet is there not among us an alarming deficiency in this duty? Have you Christians conversed with that unregenerate child or friend or neighbor in such a manner that he saw your very heart was melted within you for his lost condition? In a manner so tender that he saw you must be sincere and in so plain a manner that his conscience was reached? O if we neglect these personal addresses the blood of that child or friend or neighbor will be perhaps required of us.

The fifth reason why there is not a general revival of religion among us is that Christians neglect the direction of the text to, *confess their faults one to another and to pray for one another.*

If we felt as we ought the deceitfulness and depravity of our hearts we should feel anxious to have our hopes examined and tested by our brethren. After a full confession of our faith in the statement of the ground of our hopes perhaps they might discover to us some radical deficiency. And if we felt as we ought our lamentable backslidings we should desire the faithful reproofs of a friend and fellow Christian

that we might be healed. But are we in the habit my brethren of the mutual confessions and prayers for each other? Do we search one anothers hearts and bear those close enquiries with Christian spirit which reach the conscience and cause us to tremble? Before you can scripturally hope for a revival Christians you must be better acquainted with one anothers hearts and when you meet this must be a subject of your conversation in the place of those worldly concerns which we fear are now more eagerly enquired after than the concerns of your immortal souls.

We shall mention but one other cause why the cause of religion is not generally revived among us and that is we are depending upon one another.

If I do not mistake such thoughts as the following passed through our minds. We say to ourselves I do not indeed feel prepared for a revival of religion myself. I am yet dull and insensible to the condition of those around me. But I hope that other professors are awake and I have more faith in their prayers than in my own even if ever so much aroused. But brethren what if such a feeling should exist in the heart of every Christian in this place? What then would become of a revival of religion? The fact is every professor of religion should feel as if he himself were the only stumbling block - as if his stupidity was the only cause why God did not pour out his Spirit without measure. It is I and I alone over whom sinners are stumbling to perdition. I am the Achar of this church - I am the accursed thing in the camp that provokes the wrath of God. And indeed this may all be solemnly true. If everyone of us who is stupid or sinful though all the rest are awake, he may counteract all the exhortations and all the prayers of the rest. For his sake alone the Spirit of God may be withdrawn and a spiritual sleep deep as the slumber of the grave be suffered to rest upon us. Let each one of us then feel as if the eternal welfare of this people rest upon himself alone. Let him feel as if he must give an account at the bar of God for every soul among this people that is going down to destruction. Let him but realize that such a load of responsibility as this is upon him and he cannot sleep unless he be destitute of religion.

And my brethren is it not most astonishing out of condescension and mercy in God that he should have awakened ever one sinner in the place while there is such a deep slumber in this church! It is indeed a miracle of grace. And yet do we believe unless grossly deceived that not only one impenitent sinner has been awakened but several. Yes, Christians, while you have been asleep God has been at work. Before you have called God has answered. Though you deserved the severest judgment for our backsliding and dreadful apostasy yet has he visited us with tokens of astonishing mercy. And now it is not evident that God is waiting to see whether we make a right improvement of those mercies - to see whether they will answer us to repent and pray and exhort the wicked. And if they do not produce this effect depend upon it that judgment such as this church and people never yet witnessed will be poured out upon us without mixture. Depend upon it that the Spirit of God insulted and grieved so deeply will flee from us no more to visit us until this generation be all swept into eternity. Depend upon it that, *the enemy will come in like a flood*, while there will be present no, *Spirit of the Lord to lift up a standard against him*. Depend upon it that you will see your neighbors and friends and children living without God and dying without hopes - and as you follow them to the grave O how will it unnerve the stoutest heart to reflect that they have gone down to the world of woe because you grieved away from them the Spirit ready to convert them. And yet we sleep - *My God my God why hast thou forsaken us?* Why hast thou left us under the curse of the barren fig tree?

*Turn, turn us mighty God*

*And mould our souls afresh*

*Break sovereign grace these hearts of stone*

*And give us hearts of flesh.*

*[Source: Hymn, Is this the kind return. Isaac Watts]*

Delivered

At Conway September 1821

At Whately July 1822

At Goshen April 30 1822

## Sermon 69 Rights of God Part I

[Sermon No. 69-70, "Rights of God," Samuel 3:18, 1821 Sep,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 10]

Matthew 20:15

*Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?*

I Samuel 3:18

*It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.*

*[This sermon includes many revisions, pages crossed out, and an insertion. See insert about departure of a minister from his church; the last 3 – 4 pages are a very strident and forceful condemnation of the unregenerate. A brief insert on p. 11 deals with the resignation of a minister.]*

*There may originally have been two complete sermons here; Sermon 69 is relatively intact. Sermon 70 may be here in full or in part as pages of crossed out text including pages 5 – 7 of the scanned document. Only the cover page and reverse are transcribed at the end.]*

Much is said in every age of the world concerning the rights of man; and many volumes have been written to illustrate and a vast amount of blood and tears expended to maintain these rights. But very little is said about the rights of God. And yet it might be presumed that the Creator of all things would not be wholly destitute of rights. It may therefore be profitable to devote this hour to a consideration of some of the most important rights of the Deity in relation to his creatures.

I shall first point out some of his rights respecting the original creation.

*[The rest of page 3 is crossed out; skip to the opposite page near the top]*

Since then in the first place God had a right to create just such a universe as was agreeable to his will and according to just such a plan as he saw fit. To such a right as this there was as yet nothing to oppose because there was no other being or thing in existence. And most certainly there could not be a better universe than one which a Being of perfect wisdom and perfect benevolence and perfect justice should desire - nor could any other being be so competent to devise a plan for the government and regulation of such a universe. For non but an omniscient Being could discern all the relations and effects of any particular system by which to regulate a universe - none but an omnipotent Being could so adjust all the parts of such a complicated machine that every thing should move on without interference - none but a being of perfect benevolence could form a plan whose ultimate tendency would be happiness and none but a being of perfect justice could render such a system perfectly equal towards all.

*[Rest of page 4 left side crossed out; skip to the right side near the top]*

In the second place God had a right to make his own glory the ultimate object of all his works.

In comparison with God *all nations* nay all created beings *are as nothing and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity*. Surely then the glory of God is an object of vastly greater importance than the glory or even the happiness of his creatures - and therefore it was perfectly proper that God should propose the display of his glory as the object of his creation even if there was an opposition between this and the happiness of the creature. But the fact is that in promoting the glory of God the creature is taking the surest method to promote his own happiness. And therefore it is every account perfectly right in God to make the display of his all of his glory the great end of all his works.

From these considerations we perceive

*[Left side of page 5 crossed out; skip to the right side]*

In the third place God had a right to make his rational creatures free agents.

Had he left angels and men destitute of this free agency no service of theirs could have been voluntary and they would have been mere machines - moving only by the immediate power of God exerted upon them and therefore but little calculated to display his glory. And if He gave these free agents sufficient power to enable them to continue in a state of holiness and happiness surely he is under no obligation to prevent their falling from such a state.

*[Last two lines crossed out; skip to page six near top]*

And alas hearer it is true indeed that a part of these creatures of God have abused the power he gave them to start and have fallen and you and I my hearers are numbered among the transgressors. *The whole world indeed lieth in wickedness*. And we now proceed to consider some of the rights of God as they respect fallen beings.

In the fourth place then God had a right to propose to those who have rebelled against him his own terms of reconciliation.

In a warfare between two nations where if one get the victory it is customary to suppose that the defeated party has a right to accept or refuse the terms proposed by the conqueror. And this is all very correct because it may be possible that these terms would be unreasonable and it may be also that the vanquished nation after all has the most of justice on its side. But in many rebellions against God the universe will confess nay man himself confesses that God is wholly in the right and he wholly in the wrong. He too will knowledge that is impossible from the nature of God that he should propose any unjust or unreasonable terms - and therefore it is perfectly just that he and he alone should devise and propose the method of salvation to us rebels.

But there is another ground on which this right is established. God was not under the least obligation to offer us any terms of reconciliation whatever. He gave us his law - the penalty of violating which was eternal death without even a hint that there could be any mercy for the transgressors. Man therefore broke this law with a perfect knowledge of the consequences. After all this to suggest any method whereby the violator could be restored to favor was on the part of God an act of mere sovereign mercy: for had he exterminated the vile offenders the universe would have felt that it was only an act of justice. And besides in such a case nothing short of infinite wisdom prompted by infinite benevolence could

have devised any method for serving man that would not fully perfect God's justice. No other being could have imagined how God could be just while he justified a returning penitent. If then God determined although man had forfeited all right to his favor and incurred eternal death that he would propose to him a method of salvation who can doubt his right to save him precisely in that way he chose? And to declare that if he would not accept those terms and any every one of them he must perish.

We presume then that God has unquestionably a right to demand of rebellious man a compliance with his own conditions or be left to feel the penalty of that law he has broken. He has a right to require as a first article of reconciliation that man should *love him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength*. He has the right to declare in a second article *except ye repent ye shall all perish*. He has a right to say in the third article *except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. He has a right to say in a fourth article, *he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*. He has a right to say in a sixth article that, *by works of law shall no flesh living be justified: but you must be justified freely by grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus*. He has a right to say in a seventh article that, *faith without works is dead*. He has a right to say in eighth article, *whether ye can or eat or drink or whatsoever you do do it all to the glory of God*. He has a right to say in the ninth article, *prepare to meet thy God*.

In the fifth (second) place, God has a right out of a rebellious world to select a certain number and prepare them for glory in heaven.

We have already shown that God is under not the least obligation to show mercy to an individual of the human family. Every one of us by nature is in a state of condemnation. We are all under the sentence of eternal death. Now if God should for wise reasons known only to himself determine to save some of us and to prepare us for glory we ask has he not a perfect right to do it? What Injustice would be done to those whom he passed by since they will suffer no more than is strictly their due?

But let me exhibit the subject in a somewhat different light. What if God does actually propose certain terms to the whole human race whereby they can be restored to his favor? What if the only hindrance to their complying with them is the want of a disposition? And that he has proposed such terms and that these are most reasonable and easy the bible will testify. Now upon men's refusing month after month and year after year to close with the offered conditions has not God a right to send into the hearts of those whom he sees fit the special influences of the Spirit to subdue their opposition to him and to prepare them for glory?

To illustrate this case still more we will suppose of number of condemned criminal to be shut up in a prison by their lawful Prince. Suppose now this prince comes to the prison, throws open the doors knocks off the fetters of the criminals and bids them go out and be restored to liberty and his favor. Nay upon their refusal suppose he actually takes each one of them by the hand and endeavors gently to lead them out. And after all what if they refuse to leave their prison? Would not that prince have a right if he saw fit to exert upon some of them a more powerful influence and and as it were compel them to seek receive liberty and happiness? And has not God thrown open the prison doors of this world and invited and urged us rebels to go and be restored to peace of mind question and the hopes of heaven – nay does not his Spirit take every man by the hand and endeavor to lead him forth from his dungeon? And if after all this we refuse to be liberated has not God a right if it be his pleasure to exert a more special influence upon some of us and as it were compel us to leave the prison of sin and vise to the liberty and



happiness of heaven? What reason have those of us who are left to complain after they have resisted such invitations and offers.

The right of God then to prepare some of the human race for glory is established. The question occurs has he exercised this right? We believe he has. Every year's experience shows us some men on their deathbeds who profess and really appear to be prepared for heaven *by the working of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*.

And it is also a well known fact that many other men on their death beds manifest no hope of heaven and who fear that they are going down to everlasting perdition: nay some die as they have lived blaspheming or mocking God. Upon the whole it cannot be doubted that a part of mankind yearly descend to everlasting misery and a part ascend to happiness. And if this be admitted it will follow that God does select a certain number out of a rebellious world and prepare them for heaven. For there must be a cause why some are saved and some are lost. And what else can this cause be but the will of God? For had he pleased he could with right cause have saved every individual of the human race - and if a part persist as we know they do it must be because God does not see fit in his wise purposes to save them. Hence then it is evident that he does exert his right to prepare some for glory and have others to follow their own chosen way to destruction.

It is certain that God foreknew that men would reject the offers of salvation though most reasonable and easy - and unless we suppose God to be a changeable being we must also believe that he did in a eternity determine to save a part of those who should thus reject his offers and to leave a part to perish.

Do you then my hearers acknowledge that God has a right to select a part of this rebellious world and prepare them by his grace for heaven and do you believe that He did in eternity actually determine to save a part and to leave a part of our race? We presume no one will not be disposed to deny either of these propositions. And yet when you have admitted these you have admitted the whole of what most Christians understand by the doctrine of election.

*[Three or four lines crossed out]*

In the sixth place God has a right to appoint and superintend the ordinances and government of his visible church on earth.

He has a right to require in the members of such a church that they be really Christians born of God - justified by faith and heirs of glory - that they come out from the world and be separate that they be *holy harmless and undefiled* - that they present themselves being sacrifices to God and that they do every thing to his glory. He has a right to say unto the wicked, *what hast thou to do to declare my statutes that thou shouldst take that covenant in my mouth?* He has a right to demand of every member of this church on earth that they be, *baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost*. He has a right to require of every one of them to observe his holy Sabbath - to pray to God in their families in their closets and in his sanctuary. He has a right to demand of them that they *show forth the Lord's death till he come* by coming around his table and eating the bread symbolical of his broken body and drinking the wine symbolical of his blood poured out over the cross *in remembrance of him*. That God has such rights we need not attempt to prove to this audience nor to show that he has actually exercised these rights - for who is there present that disbelieves the bible?

But it is not needless to enquire of this church whether every member has attended to all these requirements of God? And if each one has not attempted a compliance with the solemn binding requisitions can he come forward this day within an unblushing face to partake of the body and blood of Christ? Most certainly if the bible be God's now such an one will, *eat and drink damnation to himself*. We leave it every man's conscience to enquire, *Lord is it I?*

*[Page 11 short insert]*

God has a right also to do what he will with the pastors of his church to give or withhold them in any part of his vineyard and to continue or remove them as will best accomplish his purposes. And let it never be forgotten that whenever a faithful minister is given or taken away it is God who does it although he employs the instrumentality of man. And let it not be remembered *[forgotten is crossed out]* that he intended the event whether pleasant or painful for the good of his church and the advancement of his glory.

This leads us in the seventh place to state that (in the third place) God has the right to permit tares in his church on earth to grow among the wheat until the final day of trial by fire.

God might easily have given to all true Christians the faculty of discerning who are the friends and who are the enemies of God. But he has not thought proper so to do. Even in the days of the Apostles we know that irreligious men crept in unawares into the church and although those apostles possessed miraculous gifts they could not prevent it. And ever since their days many a Diotrephes - many an Hymenaeus and Alexander - many an Hermogenes and Phygellus have intruded into the church to make shipwrecks of its faith or bring disgrace upon the religion of Christ. Many a man who neglects due observance of the Sabbath - many a man who is wholly absorbed in the pursuits of this world - many a one who does not live in the habit of secret nor family prayer - many a one who indulges habitually some vile lust - some ungodly habit such as intemperance or lewdness or slander. Some of all these characters have in every age infested the church of Christ and have done more to provoke the vengeance of God and to disgrace the cause of Christ than an hundred times their number who have sinned quietly without the vows of God upon them.

Yet notwithstanding all this God has thought proper (and who will dispute his right) to constitute his church on earth so that it is impossible in every instance let Christians exercise ever so much prudence and discrimination to prevent hypocrites from becoming professed disciples of Christ. But we know that there is a day coming when every man's work will be tried by fire. And O my brethren what a scene will the judgment day disclose! How many deeds of iniquity - how many a heart hostile to God will then be found among us who belongs to the visible church of Christ! And what an aggravate condemnation will our hypocrisies bring upon us! How will the voice of the Lord wither our very souls when we hear him declare, *I know you not depart from me all ye workers of iniquity!* And how dreadful will be the view when we see Sodom and Gomorrah lying under a doom more tolerable than ours!

In the last place God has a right to bring a

*[Page 13 all crossed out; page 14 almost entirely crossed out except bottom right side of page 14]*

In the second place God has a right to offer the terms of salvation to those impenitent sinners who he foresees will never accept them.

Yes and he has a right to entreat and beseech such to flee to the ark of safety arms of safety. We have already seen that God was under not the least obligation to offer salvation to an individual of the human family. For we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and therefore will observe *indignation and wrath tribulation and anguish*. If God sees fit to offer us rebels the terms and means of reconciliation who shall object? Not holy beings surely because that this act would fill them with a higher admiration of the tolerance of God. Not sinners themselves such because it is an offer to them of eternal happiness. And what though God foresaw that the easy and reasonable terms he should propose would be rejected? Yet would it be for his glory to exhibit to the universe his willingness to save that thus *every mouth might be stopped and the whole world become guilty before God*.

And be it known to every impenitent man that God has with the utmost sincerity exercised his right to propose terms of salvation. He has made them so plain that the wayfaring man though a fool need not enter err therein. He has made them so easy that nothing but the most willful obstinacy can refuse them. And though the millions have recanted and still continue to reject them - though probably some who now hear me will live and die at enmity with God yet be assured sinner that through eternity you will never dare lisp a murmur against God for having proposed to you hard and unreasonable terms because the light of the judgment day will show you that he could not have done anything more for your salvation than he has done consistently with his character and the good of the universe.

In the third place God has a right to leave the impenitent to harden their hearts and ripen for punishment.

We attempted in the former part of the day to show that had a right to select a certain number out of a rebellious world and prepare them for glory. And if this be allowed it will follow that he has a right to pass by the rest of mankind having them in their chosen way to fill up the measure of their iniquity.

*[Page 16 crossed out except for the last paragraph bottom right]*

And my hearers unless we believe that all men will go to heaven we must believe that God does exercise this right to leave some to harden their hearts for punishment. For it is in the power of God as we have already remarked to save every man and if some are not saved it must be because they are abandoned of God and given over to reprobate minds. And if you do indeed believe this you believe all that is meant by most moderate Christians when they speak of that most abused and offensive of all doctrines the doctrine of reprobation.

In the last place God has a right to punish the impenitent with everlasting misery.

The moment death shall terminate the mortal existence of the sinner he falls into the hands of an angry God. And that Being has a right to *thrust him into outer darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth - to cast him into hell where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched and where the smoke of his torment ascendeth up for ever and ever and to lead him down in the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God*. Do you revolt at such alarming language as this? Then do you revolt against the language of God: for these are the words of the Bible.

The right of God thus to deal with the impenitent is established first from the fact that such punishment was threatened him while on earth. That such a threatening has been made we have already shown by the text repeated from the scripture. The sinner therefore had a perfect knowledge of what awaited him if he did not repent and be reconciled to God. He had not the least reason to doubt that his torment

would be as dreadful as the bible represented. He cannot plead as an excuse for his sins that he was ignorant of the consequences.

In the second place God has a right dreadfully to punish the impenitent man because his sins deserve that. Let any man look at the perfectly and infinitely holy character of God let him look at the consequences of the single sin of our first parents - let him look at the obligations and motives the sinner violates and we venture to say that he cannot estimate the magnitude and demerit of a single sin against God. That is to say he cannot measure its enormity and extent by anything finite and he must therefore conclude it to be in an infinite evil. And for aught we can say that which produces an infinite evil deserves an infinite punishment. Thus much for one sin - let us now reckon if he can transgressions of an impenitent man's whole life and say will you hesitate and believe that God has a right to inflict upon him eternal torments?

In the third place God has a right to punish the impenitent sinner with everlasting destruction because the purposes of his government demand it. His government cannot be maintained if he does not exert his threatenings. Those threatenings are known to the universe and what must be the effect upon every holy being if they are not enacted upon persevering rebels who have determined not to obey? If they are executed what a tendency will beat the punishment have to preserve the obedience from apostasy! Let them only reflect damp any period of eternity upon the condition of those in outer darkness and how will they cling to their allegiance and love:

And now impenitent man, thou who hast never been born of water and the Spirit - this right of God to punish thee eternally will unless thou repent, soon be exercised upon thee and the moment God takes your soul from your body he will let loose upon thee all the fierceness of his wrath and press upon thee a heavier and heavier load of misery forever and ever. And what reasons have you to offer why God should not thus deal with you? Perhaps you will produce the strict morality of your life and your many kindnesses and benevolences and honorable deeds toward your fellows. For that morality we respect you and for your kindness and benevolence towards men we love you. But at the same time when we come to estimate your character in the view of God something more than morality and natural sensibility is demanded. Your conduct towards men we are willing to allow is such as should secure their respect and love - and that respect and love are your reward. But what will all this avail you if you have never loved God - if you have never served God? This is the first and the greatest commandment and if you have neglected this you have neglected the foundation. The standard by which God will try your soul is what have you done through the influence of his love: not what you have done through the mere natural sensibility or respect to the laws and customs of society. The plea then of your morality and good deeds will not for a moment be heard by that God whose demand was that you should live to his glory. And if you are yet unregenerate most certain it is that you never have loved him nor lived his glory at all.

Perhaps you will produce as a reason why God should not exert upon you the fierceness of his wrath eternally your respect for the institution of religion - your much reading of the bible your constant attendance upon the preaching of God's word and the many prayers you have put up to God. And all these duties would have been well had they been performed from right motives. But of what avail will it be to have respected the institutions of religion without any love for their authors? Of what consequence will it be to you in the day of judgment that you have read the word of God diligently without being thereby influenced to love him? What are the thousand sermons and exhortations worth which you have heard so long as the love of God was not the motive that led you to his sanctuary? And what kind of prayers are those which are offered up by him who carries a heart within him that does not

love the Being to whom they are addressed? Depend upon O impenitent man depend upon it that all your prayers and all your services though they are numerous as the sands of the seashore if the love of God be not at the foundation will only serve to show how many motives have how much light and how much love you have resisted! It is the love of God alone - we repeat it is the love of God alone that can secure us from his eternal wrath.

Such then are the pleas the unregenerate man would probably produce to justify himself before God and to prevent the execution of eternal vengeance upon him. And these are the most favourable any such man can produce: the great majority could not produce all these. But what if God in reply to such an one should reckon up his sins and set them in order before him? Methinks I hear the voice of an omniscient God coming forth from the judgment seat with the searching enquiries. I gave you sinner an immortal soul and noble faculties that you might glorify me: and now have you thus used them? How many impure thoughts how many low desires - how many unworthy motives have you suffered to occupy and engage those faculties! How have you devoted those powers to the gratification of self - to the acquisition of worldly riches or honors or pleasures instead of employing them in my service. How seldom have you prayed to me and even when you have attempted it in some seasons of alarm - how did you insult me by mocking me with a solemn sound while your heart was not right before me and did not love me! I gave you my sun to shine upon you but you spent the light in gratifying self and in neglecting and dishonoring me. I gave you my earth to support you and poured abundance of temporal mercies around you but you did not devote them to the advancement of my glory - but to gratify your own inclinations and you made me not even the return of genuine gratitude. I gave you the (Holy Spirit) my word but you disregarded its first and greatest commands. Therein I commanded you to love me with all your heart and soul and mind but you have disobeyed - therein I commanded you to devote your bodies and spirits a living and holy sacrifice to me: but you disobeyed - I commanded you to repent of your sins and make you a new heart but you have lived impenitent and unregenerate - I commanded you to trust in my beloved Son for salvation but you have trusted in your own righteousness or madly presumed upon my uncovenanted mercy - I commanded you to come out from the world and be separate and confirm me before men and stand up boldly for my cause: but you have conformed to the world and have not maintained my cause and have not professed my name. I commanded you in all things to glorify me but in all things you have dishonored me and have felt indifferent to my glory and have made no efforts to maintain the kingdom of my Son. I gave you my Holy Spirit to strive with you: but you resisted him and quenched him and spurned him from you. I brought upon you afflictions and disappointments to show you the vanity of the world and to soften your heart but they have hardened your heart. I gave you religious friends to counsel and warn you and to urge you to submit to me but you have neglected their counsels and neglected me. I gave you to hear many sermons and exhortations but they have only served to harden your heart. I gave you my Sabbath: but what idle conversation have you engaged in - what worldly nay what carnal thoughts have you indulged - yea even in my sanctuary what lightness have you felt - what vile sensual thoughts have these occupied your minds and how little reverence have you felt for my name or character or commands! How little have you prayed on the Sabbath - how little examined your hearts - how often absented yourself from my house for the slightest reason - how much of the day have you spent in reflecting upon your worldly concerns and in and in devising new plans for your worldly advancement! In short you have never loved me at all! You have never done a single deed to promote my glory - you have never repented of your sins after a godly manner - you have never offered me a single prayer that was acceptable - you have never performed one of my commands from a right motive. In all your ways you have acted supremely for self - you have abused my mercies - neglected my offers of of salvation - dishonored me in your thoughts and feelings and actions - you have forsaken me in all your ways and now I forsake you. *Depart from me thou cursed into everlasting fire prepare for the Devil and his angels.*

Thus impenitent man will your mouth be stopped in the day of judgment and your vain pleas will never endure the scrutiny of an omniscient holy God. And that God will arrive clothed with vengeance to the exercise of that right he has to punish you with everlasting destruction. And even now the bow of God's wrath is bent and the arrow is on the string and is pointing at your heart and nothing delays it but the sovereign mercy of God and he an angry God. It is that alone which keeps you out of hell. It is that alone which restrains the darkening clouds of sinner vengeance from bursting its thunders and its lightnings over your head.

Christian what a miracle of grace was it that you gave a new heart! Why was it that you had such a favor conferred upon you while others with no worse natural inclinations than yourself are left to feel the everlasting torments of perdition! O the obligations imposed upon you by this act of sovereign mercy are infinite. And may you feel them deeply and feel them this afternoon when you commemorate the wonderful act of redemption around the table of your Lord may you feel rising within you a new and unconquerable resolution to go forth and vindicate the rights of God in an ungodly world. Remember brethren that if you stand forth finally defence of these God will stand forth in defence of you before an assembled universe.

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*[This appears to be the end of Sermon 69. All that remain of Sermon 70 are the cover page with one paragraph of text. The second page is crossed out in pencil but is transcribed below. The text may continue on pages 5 and 6 of the scanned document; much of that text is crossed out in pencil and has not been transcribed.]*

Delivered (Sermon 69 and 70)

At Conway September 1821

At Amherst College October 1831

At Northampton November 1832

At Amherst College April 1835

At Amherst North Parish July 1838

At Conway March 1839

At Amherst College March 1848

At Amherst College February 1853

## Sermon 70 Rights of God Part 2

[Sermon No. 69-70, "Rights of God," Samuel 3:18, 1821 Sep,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 10]

I Samuel 3:18

*It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.*

*[See remarks at the beginning of Sermon 69.]*

In the morning discourse we made no remarks upon this text but hurried forward to a vindication of the rights of God. And yet in fact every one of those propositions we then made was a command upon the world we have just read. They were as you doubtless recollect the submissive reply of Eli to Samuel when the state of things is the real if not the professed object of all sinful beings. All their efforts all their feelings are in violent opposition to that benevolent plan which God is carrying on for the happiness of the universe. And it would seem to mortal faculties that the only way to counteract this opposition would be to exterminate sin from the universe. But a God of perfect wisdom has so arranged the constitution of the moral world that he often employs the wicked actions of men to advantage his purposes and promote his glory so that while they are giving vent to their ungodly action are in fact most eminently promotive of the ultimate good of the universe. And that God has a right to exercise this astonishing power whereby he causes the wrath of man to praise him we need not spent time in proving. For to deny this would be to deny...

## Sermon 71 Religious Joy

[Sermon No. 71, "Religious Joy," I Thessalonians 5:16, 1821 Sep,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 11]

Thessalonians 5:16

*Rejoice evermore.*

In ancient days a certain man suddenly changed his religious opinions and giving up all other pursuits he went about to persuade his countrymen that they were erroneous in their faith and practice though they professed to have received their system of belief immediately from God. This person appeared to the more reputable and distinguished of his countrymen and indeed almost all of them from the highest to the lowest to have become a lunatic and to be a genuine enthusiast. And they concluded that it was their duty to treat him as a madman and to restore him to his reason if possible if not to destroy him from the earth. Accordingly a violent persecution commenced against him and on many occasions he escaped as it were by a miracle from imminent destruction. Often was he imprisoned and brought before the magistrate and tried for high treason. Still he persisted in openly maintaining his new religious opinions and by his perseverance and superior faculty of persuasion and acuteness in argument he drew after him from the poor and ignorant classes of society a considerable number of followers. This served only to increase the hatred and persecutions of his countrymen against the leader and against his proselytes. *Five times received he forty stripes save one. Hence was he beating with rods, once was he stoned, thrice suffered he shipwreck. He was in journeyings often in periods of waters in perils of robbers in perils by his own countrymen in perils by foreigners in perils in the city imperils in the wilderness imperils in the sea imperils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness in wretchings often and hunger and thirst in fastings often and cold and nakedness.* His followers also had trials of *cruel mocking and scourgings yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned were tempted were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute afflicted tormented.* Indeed this man and his followers were outcast from society from poor penniless persecuted wanderers having scarcely a place to lay their heads. Or if they abode in any city their meetings and deliberations were generally in some secret spot and they had neither riches nor influence to spread their cause.

Among other cities which the leader of this new and despised sect visited was Thessalonica. Here he publicly defended his cause in the historian tells us thereby the whole city was set in an uproar and that this leader of the sect was sent away by night to save his life. A considerable time after his departure he sent back to his proselytes a letter to give an account of himself and to confirm them in his cause. And among other things he exhorts them to *rejoice evermore.*

At first view such an exhortation as this looks like an insult upon the Thessalonians. For in consequence of the persuasions of this leader they had abandoned the religion of their fathers and thereby thought themselves exposed to the severest miseries and they lived constantly exposed to punishment insults and death. They were in jeopardy every hour. And now how ridiculous nay what a mockery of their feelings was it for this men who had been the sole means of their distress to direct them to *rejoice*



*evermore!* And yet my hearers there is one circumstance that will make us pause before we form such an opinion. This leader was Paul a follower of Jesus Christ - the man who told his disciples that his kingdom was not of this world. And Paul was persuaded that his proselytes in Thessalonica were really converted to the religion of the Gospel. Now then a question occurs whether there is not something in this religion that will enable a person to rejoice even in the time of severe affliction? Whether there is not a peace of mind which as the world cannot give so it cannot take away? Whether a man may not have so lively a sense of the things of eternity and so firm a conviction of future happiness as in a great measure to carry him above the trials and distresses of life? We know indeed that there are many who supposed that the things of religion have nothing real in them and that the professed joys of the disciples of Christ are mainly imaginary. The Jews who persecuted Paul and his followers were fully persuaded that he and they were mad men and endeavoring to turn the world upside down and that their pretended comforts were but the reveries of insanity. And many others in all ages have been of the same opinion. But after an attentive examination of this point my hearers we are persuaded that Paul was not mad and that he spoke *forth the word of truth and soberness* and that his followers were enabled in the midst of their presentations and distresses to *rejoice evermore*. Let us spend a few moments in showing what it is that gives a real Christian peace and joy.

The first thing that enables a believer in Christ to rejoice evermore is that he is no longer exposed to everlasting burnings.

He remembers with a shuddering destructiveness that period when for months and years he lived under the curse of God - that is during all his life before his conversion. The wrath of an angry God hung over him and the two edged sword of a broken law was already ready thirsting for his blood. He stood upon the very brink of the lake of eternal fire and a single misstep would have sunk him forever. Yet the merciful right hand of God guided his steps so that he felt not and that arm of mercy held back that flaming arrow. Yea and at length its omnipotent grasp seized him from the jaws of destruction. A made him a trophy of victorious grace. Now he stands upon a rock against which the gates of hell can never prevail. Between him and hell there is a wall through which the Prince of darkness cannot penetrate and the the arm of that same God is now shielding him from an exposure to the eternal fire. O what an escape! What a countless load of despair and anguish is taken from his head! If he does not rejoice where is his sensibility where his gratitude to Jehovah?

But in the second place not only is he delivered from eternal wrath and restored to everlasting happiness - to happiness which ye hath not seen nor ever heard neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Not only has hell beneath him been closed so that he walks safely above it but heaven above him has been opened and there does he see the paradox of God with the tree of life with the river of life with the New Jerusalem founded upon twelve precious stones and having pavements of gold in the midst of a throne for him to sit upon while the glories of his Redeemer shine around in eternal splendor and beauty - all this is open before the believer as is own sure inheritance. Let him then rejoice evermore. His heart must be adamant if it do not burn with a holy joy and burst forth into singing and thanksgiving to the saints have redeemed him by his precious blood and made him a king and a priest unto God.

And third cause the Christian has for rejoicing is that he has gotten the victory over death. That is to say he has that armor upon him which ensures victory whenever he engages in the conflict. The righteousness of Christ is the shield that can quench all the fiery darts of the last enemy. This will clear a path for the saint through the dark valley of death. This will give him a triumph over the agonies of dissolution. When he lies upon the bed of death this will direct his eyes to that Saviour and to his last

moments and such a confidence will be inspired in him who is the resurrection and the life that he can calmly say, *O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory! Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ.* And even now in anticipation of that hour the believer full of gratitude to God can feelingly exclaim, *Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ.*

A fourth source of joy to the Christian is religious meditation.

To the eye of the believer God is everywhere. He sees him in the sun and the moon and the stars in the earth air and water in every animal every insect every plant every mineral - and there is an inexhaustible fund of holy and rational joy when we can thus look at creation as the works of our father whom we love. But the Spiritual world is yet more vast - and the saint directs his contemplations chiefly to that heavenly world where is God and the Holy Spirit and the Redeemer surrounded by innumerable multitudes of holy holy happy beings whose society he is soon to join. And in order to learn the nature of the enjoyment of heaven he meditates often upon the word of God. Here too does he find a boundless field for contemplation. The nature of God the nature of man the mystery of Redemption the excellency of God's laws and the reasonableness of his terms of salvation all the subjects and a thousand others developed in the bible afford a kind of rational exalted and holy joy to him who loves religion. Like the devoted Psalmist the Christian exclaims, *O how I love thy law it is my meditation all the day. Mine eyes prevent the night watches that I might meditate in thy word.* Christians of this assembly do you know such a joy as this in contemplating the works of providence and the word of God? Have these meditations occupied your minds all the day as they did the mind of the Psalmist? If they have not is it not well to enquire seriously whether you are not deceiving yourselves with a false hope?

A fifth source of joy to the Christian is repentance for sin.

It may perhaps be thought absurd to say that that which produces pain is a source of joy. Repentance indeed is in its commencement painful. It is distressing to realize deeply that we have most wantonly and cruelly offended our Father and kindest Benefactor. But still the man who has a holy principle within him a new contending with the old will feel a joy even in the moment of his distress because that very pain is bringing down his pride that mortal enemy to his peace. And the state of feeling produced by repentance is full of peace and joy. Nay the last tear which the Christian weeps over his sins is a tear of joy - tear drawn from by a sense of returning the favour of God. And my hearers we venture to say that the saint in one deep and genuine hour of repentance experiences more delight than any man ever yet had who opened his whole life in sinful indulgence. And if this distressing part of a Christian's experiences be so mingled with pleasure - what shall we say of those seasons when God shines upon his heart without a cloud. *Of these things be done in the green tree what shall be done in the dry?* Christians of this assembly do you experience anything of this repentance whose end is joy in the Holy Ghost. If you do not see to it brethren that you are not resting in a false hope: for a Christian without repentance is a being unknown in the Bible.

In the sixth place a Christian rejoices because he has gotten the victory over his ungodly passions and corrupt inclinations.

As nothing can render a man more unhappy than to be under the dominion of his passions so nothing can produce a more serene pleasure than to have them under his feet and to say to their proud nerves thus far shalt ye come but no farther. How calm and peaceful in his bosom where every ungodly and unruly lust and appetite is restrained within its proper limits and not suffered to usurp the place of

reason and religion! When the tumult of passion begins to rise happy must be that man who can crush its impetuosity and tame the ferocity of his heart! Yet all this is the Christian unable to do by almighty grace, and it ought to be to him an occasion of joy and rejoicing.

Let it not be said that these assertions are contrary to experience: because there are many who profess to have religion who do not curb their passions but who are led captive by them at their pleasure. For my hearers we have speak of the real possessors not the mere professors of religion – two classes of men often widely different - just as different as the heirs of heaven are from the heirs of hell. If even very many men should declare that they have religion who should neglect habitually to govern their passions it would not prove that religious men did not keep them under but that these men had not religion. We cannot my brethren and we cannot believe that a man of real piety will long indulge in an habitual known sin: *for he that is born of God doth not commit sin for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God*. That is to say doubtless he cannot habitually and knowingly sin.

And now Christians of this assembly do you experience that peace with joy flowing from sustained and well regulated written passions. Or does some one of your evil inclinations habitually reign over you and disturb your comfort: nay are you not sometimes through the influence of this lust unfit for devotion? If this be the case Brethren O see to it I beseech you see to it that your hope is not a mere spiders web! Are there not many men who make no profession of religion who have more correct habits and whose morality at least is better than your own? If so the world have more reason to conclude that such are pious men than yourselves because the world must judge by the fruits. Arise then and wipe away this foul reproach upon your character and upon the name of Christ.

A seventh source whence the Christian derives joy and rejoicing is a communion with his brethren.

If we are performing a journey from one place to another on earth how pleasant is it to find a fellow traveler! And in this wilderness of sin and sorrow how much more joyful to find a fellow traveler to heaven! It strengthens the believers faith and hope when he meets with others who have passed through the same initiatory change of heart who have had similar conflicts with the world the flesh and the adversary - who feel same inward conflict between the old and the new man - who feel within them the same heart of deceitfulness and depravity but who yet trust in the same precious Redeemer as he does - who feel the same filial confidence in God – the same reliance on his grace and who eagerly look forward with ardent aspirations and elevated conceptions to the same haven of rest and eternal glory. O how sweet is it for such persons of the like hopes and experience to hold communion together! It serves to awaken the languishing graces of the believer - to make his heart kindle anew with a holy love and to disentangle itself from the fetters of this world thus to converse with and to pray with his brethren!

Christians of this audience has such communion as this with your brethren been delightful to you? When you meet one another have you engaged in close enquiries upon experimental religion! I do not ask whether you have engaged in controversy on the subject of religion nor whether you have been forward in exhibiting the faults and censuring the practices of other denominations of Christians: but have you come to converse upon the state of vital religion in your own hearts - upon the best means of advancing Christ's kingdom and upon the exceeding great reward that awaits the faithful and have you been more delighted with such conversation the more your brother was engaged in the subject and the more close and searching were his enquiries? And have you rejoiced at separation to unite in a prayer to your common father! If you have neglected all this you have not known at least one of the present pleasures of religion and you want at least one evidence of your own piety viz. a strong love of the brethren.

An eighth source of Christian joy is communion with God.

All Joy must flow from heaven to the believer. God is the centre of all his wishes and hopes and therefore to commune with him must afford the purest and sweetest pleasure. And we have no other means for communing with God but by prayer. In the sanctuary of God the Christian often finds a nearness to his heavenly Father that is delightful. Especially at the table to commemorate the death of his Redeemer does God often fill the disciples heart with the holy peace - nay some find at that season a joy unspeakable and full of glory. O it is a spot of peculiar manifestations where the presence of God is often so sensibly felt that a saint will feel how dreadful is this place – *this is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. It is good for me to be here.* In family prayer too a Christian not unfrequently finds a nearness of access to the mercy seat which fills him with the love and presence of God - and how pleasant is it for him who sustains the responsibility of the head of a family mornings and evenings to command them in faith to the care of Almighty God his most merciful father. But it is in secret prayer that the believer finds himself *able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge and is filled with all the fullness of God.* O there is a joy in secret communion with God that is beyond all price - a joy which he who has felt it would not exchange for this whole world - a joy which fills and elevates and enraptures the soul - a joy which is a foretaste of heaven. It is a moment when God shines in full glory upon the Christian soul - when the world is trodden under the believers feet - when he knows that God is reconciled to him and that he shall soon get to enjoy him.

Christians of this assembly! Has communion with God been habitually observed by you and have you often found it delightful in the sanctuary coming - consoling in the family and enrapturing in secret? Then do you possess an additional evidence that you are born of God. You have within you a source of joy whose streams will never become disgusting and will never dry up. But if you know nothing of the joys of such communion, O it is high time to enquire whether you are not leaning upon a broken staff.

The last source of joy the believer in Christ possesses lies in his effort to advance the Redeemers Kingdom among men.

If a man be himself sensible of a great deliverance and of experiencing the most sublime and delightful pleasures he will be anxious that others experience the same deliverance and the same pleasure. If you say to a friend treading over a lake of fire and in danger of falling into it every moment and if by means of your warning him of his danger he should be restored to a place of safety you could not help rejoicing at the deed. If you had just been delivered from a place of torture and could be instrumental in delivering others it must afford you pride and intense pleasure. So the Christian having trod over hell having long been under the tortures of sin - and being at length rescued from his danger and distress and restored to the hopes of heaven and the delights of religion must rejoice exceedingly if he can deliver any of his brethren from the same exposure to hell and from the tortures of sin.

And when any man does not have an earnest desire to be instrumental of the salvation of others - when he does not feel a thrill of joy to learn that a soul is born again and another subject added to Christ's kingdom must it not be because he does not realize the value of his own salvation - because he does not feel that there is such an infinite distance as the bible describes between the regenerate and the unregenerate? Or rather should it not awaken an earnest enquiry in such a man whether he himself ever has experienced religion seeing he has none of its comfort and feels so little anxiety about those around him who are walking carelessly over the bottomless pit? Christians of the assembly we put this

enquiry to you.

Such are briefly the sources whence a real Christian desires joy and rejoicing. It is his happiness to hope that he is delivered from the everlasting burnings and that he is an heir of everlasting bliss - and to realize that he has gotten the victory over death - and to reap the joyous fruits of repentance - and to triumph over his evil passions and inclinations - and to have communion with his brethren and to have sweet communion with God and his Son Jesus Christ and to be instrumental of promoting the empire of happiness. If from all these he cannot desire a pure and holy joy where can he find it on earth? O Christian, if there be one particle of pure and rational happiness on earth, it belongs to you. It is your happy privilege to taste the purest delights to be found beneath the sun nay to have a foretaste of the joys of heaven. We repeat then the text, *rejoice evermore*. We say to the believer whether in prophecy or adversity in sickness or in health – *rejoice evermore*. And Oh, while your eyes run down with tears of joy let there be mingled a tear of compassion for the unhappy multitudes around you who have none of your comfort and none of your heavenly hopes – and whose momentary laughter will soon be turned into everlasting mourning.

Delivered

At Conway September 1821

At Ashfield November 1821

At Amherst East Parish December 1821

At Muddy Brook April 1822

## Sermon 73 [Hope of Divine Mercy]

[Sermon No. 73, "Hope of Divine Mercy," Job 27:8, Romans 5:5, 1821 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 11]

Job 27:8

*For what is the hope of the hypocrite though he hath  
gained when God taketh away his soul?*

Romans 5–5

*And hope maketh not ashamed.*

There are two things that prevent the great majority of men from attending to the subject of religion. Some indulge a secret hope that they are on good ground though they know nothing and practice nothing of experimental religion. Others do not suffer themselves to reflect seriously upon the subject. For did unregenerate men fully realize that they are exposed every hour to sink forever into everlasting misery without the possibility of escape it would be morally impossible for them to rest easy. A man who sees his habitation in imminent danger from fire would find it difficult to sleep in it. So a man who realize that he was himself in imminent danger of eternal fire could not with the utmost exertion direct his thoughts from the terrifick picture. Whenever he should whatever he should engage in hell would be continually present before him and he would startle at the rustling of a leaf lest the hand of death was about to plug plunge him into it. Impenitent men therefore who are careless do not realize their actual danger or they have a hope that they are not exposed to perdition.

An immense multitude we believe are in this lost predicament. They are clinging to some kind of hope that they are secure. And some we believe are resting that hope on a proper foundation and are indeed secure shielded by the righteousness of Christ from every Spiritual danger. But there are very many others who the bible warrants in saying have merely the hope of the hypocrite that perishes when God takes away the soul. That some have false hopes is implied in the text. Paul had just been saying to his brethren that, *being justified by faith they had peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also they access by faith into that grave wherein they stood and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. And not only so continues the apostle but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience and patience experience and experience hope: And hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed around in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*

Paul in the text then is speaking of a hope of the glory of God that is a hope of future glory in heaven. And he says that this hope did not make them ashamed. It was built on such a foundation that they would not be ashamed to profess it before men and before the universe at the last day. And by this expression he implies that there is such a thing as hope of heaven of which men ought to be ashamed on earth and of which they will be ashamed at last because it rests on a delusive foundation. We must first examine those hopes which are delusive and secondly enquire into the grounds of that which will abide the trial by fire.

In the first place he has a hope that maketh ashamed at the judgment day who pursues upon the mercy of God without any faith in Christ.

So exalted and perfect is the holiness of God so irreconcilable is his character with sin in every shape that a sinful being cannot directly approaching him and live. From his eternal throne there flashes forth so many holy jealousies to guard him from the approach of whatever defileth the man who presumes to enter his presence unshielded by a mediator is madly tempting his destruction. Is it not enough to be told by an inspired person that, *no man cometh to the Father but by the Son?* Is it not enough for Christ to declare that, *without him we can do nothing*, and for an apostle to add, *There is none other name given under heaven whereby ye can be sure?* Mercy, my hearers? There is no mercy out of Christ. On every one of us who trusts in anything else for acceptance there abideth the wrath of God. There is one and only one path that leads from earth to heaven. And in the very entrance of this path is Christ. On every other side the walls of that holy city are guarded by a doubly flaming sword. And the lightning of divine justice flashes upon the man who attempts to climb up some other way in defiance of Omnipotence. The earth is indeed full of the goodness of the Lord: but in regard to saving sinful man God has selected his own way and declared that if men refuse to comply with this he shall not be saved at all. To hope for his mercy therefore in any other way is to tempt God. And when we shall meet Christ in judgment we shall be ashamed to acknowledge that we have hoped for salvation without any faith in his blood. Reason indeed might decide that the most rational way in which God can pardon man is simply through repentance and reformation. But God in his revelation has declared that he will not pardon them on these terms: but that they shall believe on his Son or he will not listen for one moment to their supplications for mercy. Whoever therefore in defiance of this declaration presumes upon God's mercy while he is out of Christ wishes upon his own destruction.

In the second place he has a hope that will make him ashamed at the bar of Christ who presumes that God is too merciful to punish any part of the human race everlastingly and that all will at length be restored to his favor.

And indeed it ought to make such an one not only ashamed of his hope but even to tremble for it and to abandon it when he opens his bible and reads that the wicked *shall go away into everlasting misery*, that they shall be punished, *with everlasting destruction - that their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched - that the smoke of their torments ascended up forever and ever*. Yes when a man reads such passages as these dictated by the God who cannot lie and so plain that nothing but an evil heart of unbelief can misunderstand them he ought to be concerned - he ought to blush that he believes that the wicked shall not go away into everlasting misery - that they will not be punished with everlasting destruction and that their worm will die and their fire will be quenched. For to presume that God will not execute his threatenings what is it but to charge him with a lie? And the man who make such a charge upon God either directly or impliedly has something worse than shame awaiting him in eternity - something worse than disappointment awaiting him - something worse than he can now imagine.

In the third place he will be ashamed of his hope who trusts to his morality and amiableness alone for salvation.

Why says someone do you continually endeavor to depreciate morality - that pillar on which society rests - that without which men would become a horde of savages and robbers? Why not rather show us the necessity of possessing it and not a man who hears you but will approve your recommendations? God forbid my hearers that we should ever refuse morality that place which He has given it. God forbid

too that we should say to any man that mere morality should save him from the burnings of perdition. For if the bible does not teach that men must be saved by faith in Christ and by that only it does not teach any thing. And that same bible teaches us also and experience teaches us that worldly morality may exist in its utmost perfection when there is not one particle of faith in Christ. Though on the other hand faith in Christ cannot exist without morality and morality too of a superior order - a morality founded on the love of God.

To show that the strictest morality and kindness may exist among the people where there is not one particle of love to God take the following illustration. Suppose a remote part of an empire to have rebelled against its lawful sovereign and to have fortified itself for the most determined opposition. Now it is easy to conceive that among these rebels there maybe established the most strict and equitable laws – and every one of them is most exact in their observance and that an infringement of the least article is punished severely and that there may be an united effort to maintain these laws in all their purity. And such a set of rules may in all their public affairs be under the most wholesome regulations and every one of them cheerfully obedient. But at the same time every one of them is in a state of most daring and obstinate rebellion against his lawful sovereign and they have cast off the authority of every one of his laws and are altogether opposed to submitting to a single regulation coming from him.

Just so in this rebellious world - men may establish the purest regulations among themselves and be most strict in the maintenance of correct moral feelings and correct moral conduct towards one another so that every feeling and every practice contrary to the standard agreed upon shall be regarded with an indignant disapprobation and punished by neglect. And we may conceive this whole world under the influence of such moral habits and feelings exhibiting an interesting spectacle to an observer who looks no farther than this world. But at the same time were he to direct his thoughts to God the rightful sovereign of the earth he might find that with all this perfect morality between men and men there is a total disregard of the commands of God - that is to say such a state of morals might exist while not an individual regarded that first great command of God to love him supremely. And therefore every individual might be under condemnation in the court of heaven as obstinate rebels.

Now as it is certain that no man will ever be saved without the love of God in his heart and as there may be the most strict morality of conduct and amiableness of feeling when there is not one particle of this love nay when the heart is actually in rebellion against heaven it follows that morality alone does not secure salvation. Faith in Christ too is declared essential to salvation - and certainly a man may be moral and amiable without this faith and therefore we repeat the conclusion that morality however strict and amiable however attracting do not in themselves secure us from the condemnation of rebels under which we all by nature lie.

And yet my hearers we believe that many men do actually rest their everlasting all upon their good deeds. Many will feel if they do not say that it has been their intention to render to all their dues and to be benevolent in rendering the wants of their fellow man and that in short they may have consciences void of offence towards all men because they have always endeavoured to act as they should act and that they do not fear that justice will not be done them in another world. O man that is just what we fear. We fear that justice will be done you and then you are certainly undone. For God commanded you to love him supremely and to live continually to his glory and now this is the question that will be asked you before the bar of God not what moral deeds you have performed toward your fellow men but have you complied with the first and greatest commandment of loving God. And if you reply in the negative certainly if God deal justly with you he will punish you with everlasting destruction. It is the justice of God then that you are to fear. And when he demands of you why you did not love him will you not be



ashamed to recount your good deeds to your fellows as a vindication of yourself when you are deficient in that first of all requirements love to your God? O my hearers if there be one of you existing on such a delusive hope give it up - give it up now - be ashamed of it now that you may not be ashamed of it in the day of judgment. For certainly if the word of God be true it will not abide in that day and will be swept away like a spiders web by the whirlwind of the Lord.

In the fourth place that is a hope that will finally make a man ashamed which is built on the failings of professed Christians.

There are not a few who when enquired of concerning the state of their hearts not having experienced anything of regenerating grace and feeling perhaps a little irritated at the enquiry will reply that they believe themselves as safe and that their lives are as good as such or such a professor of religion. But the difficulty in this case my hearers is that the professor of religion who does not live according to the vows that are upon him has no evidence that he is safe - nay until he amend his ways and live godly in Christ Jesus there is evidence that he an enemy of God and that his condemnation will be more aggravated in eternity than that of the man who lives carelessly. If then you are in no safer condition than the professor of religion who lives in sin you are in greater danger than most other unregenerate men. You may flatter yourself with the idea that you shall go as certainly to heaven as that professor. But the fact is that professor will not go to heaven at all - and if you accompany him you will be sunk in perdition deeper than Sodom and Gomorrah. And when you are in hell being in torment it will afford but a miserable consolation to reflect that a false or backslidden professor of religion was the means of your destruction. Away then with such a miserable subterfuge - such a shameful hope.

In the fifth place he has a hope that will finally make him ashamed who is depending for salvation upon his supposed conversion rather than upon the fruits of his conversion.

We shall best illustrate the meaning of this proposition by stating a case. A person becomes alarmed concerning his eternal safety and is brought under deep convictions for his sins and his alarming condition. After a period of distress which is perhaps very deep he distress subsides perhaps suddenly and it may be that his succeeding comforts and joys are very great. For a time he is constant and fervent in his prayers to God in his closet - and he is strict in the performance of every duty relating to himself or his fellow man or his God. But ere long he begins to neglect the duties of the closet he takes little interest in social worship he begins to doubt the reality of religion and especially of peculiar attention to it. He neglects to come forward and profess his faith in his Redeemer and in a short time though he may continue to be moral and amiable, his closet is neglected almost entirely and he scarcely performs a single duty of religion that is peculiar to all Christians such as self-examination - repentance - prayer - conversations with his brethren - communion at the Lord's table - exhortations to sinners etc. But yet it is rare that his conscience is alarmed and he does not often suffer himself to compare his present stupid state with that he was in at the period of his supposed conversion. If by chance such a person is enquired of whether he indulges a hope that he is on safe ground and in favor with God - he will perhaps bring forward his supposed conversion many years previous to establish his tittle to a Son of God. Although during those many years that have elapsed since the supposed period of his conversion he has lived just as those who make no pretensions to religion. In other words he depends for evidence of his Christian state not on the fruits of his faith in Christ: but solely on those feelings he experienced a long time past. Now let us see whether the bible does not forbid his trusting to any such ground as this for salvation.

What is the mark my hearers which Christ gives to determine who are Christians? *By their fruits*, says

he, *ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Now this man of whom we speak has none of these fruits to prove him a son of God. The many years ago said Lord Lord unto Christ but he has neglected to do the will of God. We ask then has he the least reason to conclude that he has ever experienced religion? Again the apostle says, *faith without works is dead being alone.* And is not this exactly the faith of this man? He had faith and yet it did not produce works. Therefore it was a dead faith a faith which will make ashamed at last. We do not deny indeed that a man may live long in a backslidden state who is a real Christian. But if he fall into such a state soon after his supposed conversion and continue in it year after year he has no evidence we say that he is a Christian. No matter how deep were his convictions for sin - no matter how clear were his succeeding views nor how lively were his joys of the fruit of those convictions and joys did not appear in his life - or if like the seed sown in stony ground the sun withered away the tender blade that man cannot according to the bible say that he was ever born again. Real religion my hearers is an abiding operative entire principle and it will inevitably show itself in the life. So that if it do not appear in the conduct - if you do not habitually appear a man has every reason to conclude that it does not exist within him and that if he trust to any religious feelings experience of many years since he is trusting to a hope that will make him ashamed. It is the present state of the feelings and of the conduct that can alone determine the Christian state - that is to say if a man finds himself now in habits of communion with God - of repentance for sin - of laboring in the cause of Christ and if he actually now strive to fulfill all the commandments of Christ this gives more grounds for hope than any solitary experience we have had many years ago. Many persons indeed spend year after year in trying to ascertain whether they did not secure a new heart a long time since. But were they to occupy as much time and devote as much labor and praying and repenting and serving Christ now they would not be wanting in evidence that they love God. It is no matter when we become Christians if we are now Christians: and if we do not serve and love God now it will not avail us anything to ascertain that we loved him formerly. Abandon then my hearers if any of you are cleaving to such a hope as this abandon it and adopt the resolution of Paul to, *forget the things that are behind and reaching forth to those that are before press forward towards the mark for the picture of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus your Lord.*

The way is open to proceed to the second head of discourse where we proposed to examine the ground of hope which maketh not ashamed. And it may confidently be stated that a, *good hope through grace*, rests solely on the righteousness of Christ. But what is the evidence a man can have that he has genuine saving faith in Christ? We have already shown that mere morality and amiableness does not prove it. We have shown too that faith without works does not prove it and that convictions for sin - repentance for sin and secret prayer are necessary to prove that our supposed religious actions are not mere worldly morality. On the other hand good works are necessary to show that our faith is not a dead faith - a mere delusion of the imagination.

And my hearers we believe that if a man find himself year after year habitually possessed of religious feelings and at the same time habitually performs religious actions that he has the strongest evidence that can be given that he has that hope which maketh not ashamed. Permit me then to enquire of each individual before me whether you are habitually impressed with a sense of your sinfulness - whether you habitually repent of sin - and habitually pray in secret - and habitually meditate upon religion and habitually long for more holiness and whether you habitually strive to perform the commandments - every one of the commandments of Christ. If you answer that you do probably you have a hope that will not make you ashamed. If you answer that you do not and yet are not destitute of a hope of immortal happiness probably yours is the hope of the hypocrite that will perish when God taketh away your soul.

Delivered

At Conway 1821

## Sermon 74 No Hope but in Christ

[Sermon No. 74, "No Hope But in Christ," Acts 4:12, 1821 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 11]

Acts 4:12

*Neither is their salvation in any other: for there is none other name  
under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*

The object of this discourse my hearers is to drive you to despair. And not until you are brought to that state have we any hope that you will ever be saved from eternal misery. Until you are driven to despair we despair of your salvation. Indeed no man ever entered heaven unless he passed through the gates of despair. He must despair of his own righteousness – despair of his evil heart - despair of his repentance – despair of the prayers of others - despair of the means of religion in short - he must despair of everything but the sovereign mercy of God through Jesus Christ. And these are the points brethren upon which we would now endeavor to persuade you to despair.

In the first place men must despairing their own righteousness as a ground of their salvation.

In order to determine whether men may not be saved by their own good deeds let us look at the conditions of their acceptance with God. He has given them a law that is holy just and good to regulate all their thoughts and words and actions and to that law is annexed a penalty. The language of this law is this (\*) *Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them. Whosoever keepeth the whole law and yet offendeth in one point is guilty of all.* (\*) *Moses, says Paul, describeth the righteousness which is of the law that the man which doeth those things shall live by them.* It is evident then that if any man can observe every one article of God's law – every one of his thoughts every one of his feelings and every one of his actions be exactly according to the law or will of God he can justify himself before God and thus attain salvation. But if during a man's whole life he indulge a single thought or feeling or word or action contrary to this he is at once cut off from the possibility of being justified by the law - for *whatsoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all.* The question then occurs – has any mere man since the fall been able perfectly to keep keep the commandments of God? And for deciding this Christian we cannot have better authority than the bible. Says Solomon there is *not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not.* And John says, *If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* Again he says, *no man liveth sinneth not.* And Paul says, *we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* If this be true and if *the wages of sin is death*, as the same apostle declares. How we ask we ask - we ask it with emphasis - how is any man to be justified and acquitted before God by his own works? Constantly every one of us by nature lies under the sentence of eternal death: And now since God must execute his threatenings or forfeit the integrity of his character how can we prevent his coming out in judgment against us? Suppose that for this time we could perfectly meet the laws of God? Yet would that be no more than is justly his due - still might it be said that we were, *unprofitable servants - we have done that which it was our duty to do.* For he has most justly commanded us to love him with *all our heart and soul and mind and strength* and what more than this could we do? But still what would become of those sins or that single sin of which the Scripture says we have all been guilty and for which God has shown he will punish us? How can we make amends to God

for that offense if for the time to come we can do no more than is our most reasonable duty? Surely that sentence must be executed upon us without mitigation if we depend upon our own righteousness to defend us and render ourselves acceptable to God. We may with perfect truth repeat the conclusion of Paul so often made in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians - *therefore by deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.*

Thus far my hearers we have been supposing that man is guilty of only a single sin during his whole life - and yet by that one soon he is effectively cut off from even the possibility by his own righteousness of escaping everlasting misery. But how much more gloomy and hopeless is the prospect on the part of man when we reflect that not a day passes over his head but he is guilty of many sins! How enormous will be the catalog during a life of threescore years and ten! And how is he to atone for all these by his righteous deeds? His righteous deeds! We have indeed spoken of men by nature as performing righteous acts: but brethren what is the real truth on this subject! Let us again resort to the bible. *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand that did such after God. They are all gone out of the way: there is none righteous no not one. The heart of the sons of man is full of evil and madness is in their hearts while they live. The heart is deceptive above all things and desperately wicked. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* And is this indeed the language of inspiration? And could not God find a single man in whom by nature there was any righteousness? Not any one in whose heart there was not madness - not one the imagination of whose heart was not evil from his youth? Does not the bible exaggerate or mean something else when it describes men so wicked by nature that they do not love God at all nay that they are enemies of God? Ah, my hearers, be this humbling doctrine ever so repugnant to our feelings it is nevertheless a plain doctrine of scripture. What then becomes of the righteous men as a ground of their acceptance with God? How can they be justified by that which they do not possess? How can he be justified before God, *whose heart is full of evil who drinketh in iniquity like water - whose heart is desperately wicked and the imagination of whose heart is evil from his youth?* Yet this is the very scriptural account of man. The sooner then that man despairs of salvation by his own righteousness the better. For these cannot be any more offensive to God than for a being thus depraved to come forward and claim salvation as due to his goodness. Hence it is that we find then the apostle Paul arguing with such correctness against the doctrine of justification by works.

But suppose God to implant as we know he does implant in the hearts of some a new principle a principle of holy obedience: cannot these be justified by works? We reply in the words of an eminent writer, *I will says he but only make a demand: If God should yield unto not as unto Abraham if fifty, forty, thirty, twenty yea if ten good persons could be found in a city for their sakes this city should not be destroyed: but and if he should make us an offer this large search all the generations of men since the fall of our Father Adam and one man that has done one action which have passed from him pure without any stain or blemish at all; and for that one man's only action neither man nor angels shall feel the torments which are prepared for both. Do you think that this person this ransom to deliver men and angels could be found to be among the sons of men? The best things which we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned. How then can we do anything meritorious or worthy to be rewarded?* (Hooten Eccles. Pol.)

In the second place I would persuade men to despair of their own hearts without divine influence.

Were there within the heart of man a natural disposition to love God and religion he might cultivate this disposition without God's assistance and by his own exertions - by his own strength altogether acquire a love to God and to holiness - so that there would be no need of the grace of God at all to render a man

fit for heaven. In such a case man should trust in his own heart and not despair of it. But my hearers how does such a view accord with those texts we have cited under the first head of this discourse? When the bible says that, *the heart of the sons of men is full of evil*, are we to understand that it is not full but contains some holiness some disposition to love God? When the bible says that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth are we to conclude that a part of that imagination is evil and a part good? When that sacred book tells us that among the sons of men God could not find one righteous no not one are we to understand that those only are meant who have not cultivated their natural disposition to love God and that after all there are some righteous? When the bible says that, *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them because they are Spiritually discerned*, are we to understand that some natural men do receive the things of the Spirit or God? O my hearers, *let God be true but every man a liar*. Better is it for us to believe the words of God than to flatter ourselves with the idea that these are exaggerated expressions and that our hearts are not so bad as the passages literally imply. Ask a man under deep and solemn impressions for sin whether he does not believe his heart to be full of evil and whether the imagination of his heart has not been evil from his youth and he will tell you that such apparently extravagant expressions as these do but faintly express the deep rooted - the entire depravity of his heart. Ask the Christian who has daily examine his heart for thirty or forty years whether some abatement ought not to be made for the meaning of such texts and he will reply that his constant experience has shown them to be literally true. O then my hearers ought not man to despair of ever deriving his salvation from such a fountain of any iniquity as his heart? When the God who cannot lie has told him that his *heart is deceitful above all things*, will he dare trust in it? And when that same God has added that his *heart is desperately wicked*, ought he not will he not give up all confidence in it and despair by the utmost strivings of unaided nature to cultivate in it a love to God and to holiness? What madness to trust our everlasting salvation upon that which is deceitful above all things or to expect holiness to spring up without the Spirit in that which is desperately wicked?

And yet o my brethren this is this the rock on which thousands have split. It is this unwillingness to believe ourselves by nature as bad as the Scriptures describe that has peopled the world of woe with myriads of our deluded race. For when a man acknowledges the entire corruption of his heart and his enmity to God he must also acknowledge that if he ever be saved must be through the sovereign grace of God. This is a degree of humiliation which the heart of man naturally resists with the utmost violence. And it is to the unregenerate a hard saying. Indeed unless the Spirit of God convince men of their sin of righteousness and judgment to come it is in vain to endeavor to persuade them that their hearts are so particularly destitute of holiness and so hostile to God. And yet also until they do feel this corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts they will never apply in an acceptable manner to God for a new heart. They will never come feeling that they are entirely lost – and despair altogether of their own hearts as containing anything that is acceptable before God. They will not feel that their salvation must be entirely of sovereign unmerited grace: but will suppose that they have within them some powers and feelings and that they have performed some deeds acceptable to God. But certain it is that God will have all the glory of man's salvation or he will not save them. We long therefore my hearers to see you despairing of your hearts. For then we should not despair of your salvation.

And in the third place we would persuade you to despair of your repentance. We do not mean that you should cease to repent or regard genuine sorrow for sin is a little importance: but merely that you should not depend upon this for salvation. It is no uncommon thing to find men relying upon the means of their salvation as the processing cause of it. After a person has been long under conviction for sin and has felt some sort of sorrow for it he is apt to suppose that on this account he is more acceptable to God and he cannot imagine why he is not converted. Now this man my hearers is building up a righteousness

of his own. He makes his repentance the reason why God should regenerate him: whereas had his repentance been as genuine and deep as that of David described in the 51st Psalm he could on this account lay no claims to the converting grace of God - because after all he would deserve everlasting misery. And still would he be dependant entirely upon the merits of Christ: *For there is salvation in none other: and there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved.* But my hearers the repentance of a man who does not love God and who never has been regenerated like other things which the wicked perform does not proceed from a right matter and therefore cannot be acceptable before God. To expect regeneration then on account of his repentance is to expect that God will reward an action which he cannot approve. While therefore every man is bound to strive to exercise genuine repentance for his sins let him remember that this is only a condition not the processing cause of his salvation and that after all there is another thing he must do before he will be saved. He must submit to the righteousness of Christ. He must trust in him and in him only and despair of everything but God's mercy in him.

In the fourth place men are exhorted to despair of their prayers as being able to save them. These too however well and acceptably performed are merely means which God has seen fit to appoint and can never by their intrinsic efficacy bring down regenerating or sanctifying grace. Even the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous which availeth much owes all its efficacy to the merits of Christ. Without these it would be merely an abomination before God because the very best service of the most holy man that ever lived is mixed with sin: and if Christ had not atoned for that sin God could not look upon the prayer with which it was mixed without abhorrence. But in this case as in that of repentance if it be the prayer of an unregenerate man it is the prayer of one who does not love God and it does not proceed from the right motive and cannot be pleasing to God. What presumption then is it for a sinner however correctly he may pray to depend upon his prayers for acceptance with God! And what a self-righteous spirit does it manifest! O the merits of Christ - the merits of Christ are the only ground of acceptance with God and to submit to his righteousness and despair of everything else is what God requires. *For there is none other name under heaven etc.*

And for this same general reason we urge men in the fifth place to despair of the prayers of others in their behalf. These prayers may indeed be the means of their conversion. But after all a man has something more to do than to sit still and depend upon those prayers. After all he must submit to Christ and feel that nothing but his atonement can save him from eternal ruin. It is proper indeed for the impenitent to solicit the prayers of Christians in their behalf: because God has appointed this as one of the means of salvation. But at the same time the sinner should feel that unless he himself submit all will avail nothing. He should feel that there is no efficacy at all in those prayers in themselves - but that their efficacy rests solely on the suffering and obedience of the Lamb of God.

In the sixth place we would urge you my hearers to despair of all the means of grace you enjoy - that is to say do not depend upon them for your salvation. It is no uncommon thing for men to feel that if they diligently read the scriptures and regularly attend upon the preaching of the Gospel and observe the Sabbath if they do all these they feel as if they have nothing more to perform and that they shall most certainly be converted before they die. But, brethren, this is depending upon the means of grace instead of Christs righteousness for salvation. To read the Scriptures is a duty - to support public worship by attending it is a duty and to keep the Sabbath is a duty none of which ought to be neglected: the truth is these things cannot save us. And besides all these we should feel it to be our duty - our duty this moment to submit to Christ and to love God and to repent of sin. And so long as we expect to be regenerated by a mere attendance upon the external duties that is so long as we expect God will convert us as a reward for our performance of these depend on it my hearers that we shall never be

converted. The sooner therefore we letgo this delusive hope the sooner we despair of the means of grace as a ground of salvation so much the better. While then my hearers you are diligent in the improvement of the means of grace remember that after all you must submit to the righteousness of Christ or these means will only ensure your final condemnation.

In the last place we would persuade you to despair of everything as being able to save you but the sovereign mercy of God in Jesus Christ. We have mentioned several things to which men are clinging for salvation. But there are a thousand other things on which they rely which is not possible to point out in a sermon. But we may in general terms say that on whatever foundation a man is resting save Jesus Christ there is no hope for him and of every thing else we are urge him to despair. What other foundation for hope is there to a being who is entirely lost? Yet self-righteousness invents a thousand schemes of salvation and holds forth a thousand miserable stakes upon which the unrenewed heart will us seize. And it is self-righteousness after all that induces man to rest upon anything and upon every thing rather than upon Christ's righteousness. But the voice of God has declared that *There is salvation in no other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Other foundations can no man say than that is laid which is Christ Jesus.* Abandon then O sinner abandon every thing else and come to the cross of Christ: for everything else will ere long abandon you. But in Christ all fullness dwells and whosoever cometh to him he will in no wise cast out. O Despair of everything else: for everything else will at last make you (drive you to final) despair.

And my hearers, to this despairing condition to this low state of submission God is waiting to see you reduced and the moment you let go of everything but Christ and his cross God will give you a new heart. And it is because you are clinging to something else - still bolstering yourself up with some pillow of self-righteousness that you are not converted. We long therefore to see you driven to a state of despair. We long we pray that you may despair of your own righteousness - of your evil heart - your repentance - of your prayers - of the prayers of others - of all the means of religion and in short of everything but the sovereign mercy of God in Jesus Christ. For then and not till then have we least hope of your salvation.

In conclusion of this discourse we would however suggest a caution. Let no one suppose from what has been said that I am discouraging the constant the diligent use of all the means God has put into our hands for attaining salvation such as prayer social and secret - reading the Scriptures - meditation and attendance upon religious worship in the house of God and occasional meetings. Indeed I would urge most earnestly that every such means be improved: and for this obvious reason that God converts men almost in every instance while they are using those means and leaves those to perish who neglect them. Let it be distinctly understood that I am not endeavoring to depreciate the value of means in religion but that I am only warning man not to rely upon these as if they were able to save them. I wish to convince every man that besides the use of means they have something to do - and that is to submit to the righteousness of Christ. Of everything short of this we earnestly urge them to despair.

A single inference and we close.

And this subject teaches us, my audience, the reason why so many who appear to be seeking salvation finally fail of it. It is because they stop short of Christ - it is because they do not despair everything besides his atonement. They may give up many things and submit to a certain degree of humiliation and mortification: but so long as there is one thing remaining except Christ of which they do not despair they are as effectually cut off from heaven as those who never take a single step towards it. I how many are there who are resting in the means of grace! How many who feel that they have done all in their power to attain salvation and that they must wait for conversion! All these are merely self-righteous pleas of a



deceitful heart to avoid submitting to Christ. O let such awake and tearing away their self-righteous supports let them fly to the cross of Christ let them cling to this as the shipwrecked sailor clings to the rocks resolving if they must perish to perish there. And yet it must be a new thing in the universe for a despairing sinner to perish with his arms around the cross.

Delivered

At Conway November 1821

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## Sermon 76 To the Aged

[Sermon No. 76, "To the Aged," Genesis 47:29, 1821 Oct,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 11]

Genesis 47:29

*And the time drew nigh that Israel must die.*

*[Note comments on his predecessor pp. 5 and 9. Also page 9 he seems to give up on some unregenerate elders.]*

There is a solemn pleasure in reading the history of the patriarchs as they approached the close of life. It is interesting to observe when they saw the time of their departure to be at hand with how much composure they set about the work of preparation. No duty in life and in the midst of health was more faithfully and exactly performed than this last duty. They first looked back upon their lives and reviewed the way in which the Lord had led them through this wilderness world and his goodness often drew from them a song of thanksgiving and praise. Then they cast their eyes upon the children and companions around them bestowing on them the blessing of God. And last of all turning their eyes to the heavenly world before them they gazed calmly and steadily upon its unmingled joys until death was swallowed up in victory.

The most striking instances of this kind on record were Moses and Israel more commonly called Jacob. Moses after forty years sojourning in the wilderness having now reached the borders of Canaan and being debarred from entering it himself knew that his end was nigh. He therefore gathered together the Hebrews and rehearsed to them the dealings of God with them and the laws he had given them with the blessings and the curses of disobedience and caused them to renew their covenant with God. After a solemn charge to Joshua his successor he composed a hymn of adoration and praise and then blessed the tribes of Israel. His work on earth being now completed, *he went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo to the top of Pisgah that is over against Jericho*, and there saw before him the promised land of the heavenly Canaan and there this servant of the Lord perhaps in a trance of wonder at the goodness of God breathed out his last.

Israel after having seen so much of the goodness of God in saving the life of his son Joseph and after having lived with him in Egypt seventeen years perceived that his last sickness had come *and the time drew nigh when Israel must die*. To Joseph and his sons he related the dealings of God with him in his life and after blessing Ephraim and Manasseh he called unto his own sons and said, *Gather yourselves together that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days*. Then with a prophetic spirit he declared to them the blessings and afflictions that would come upon them and their posterity to the end of time. He predicted too the coming of Christ and with a song absorbed no doubt in his glories he burst the prison of the flesh and ascended to partake of his fullness in heaven.

My venerable gray headed fathers and mothers before me, you will permit me this afternoon to address you. I speak to you only who feel that you have long been descending the vale of life and who realize by

your infirmities and weakness that your days on earth are almost at end and that time draweth nigh when you must die. No one in this house indeed knows how near he is to eternity. The young, however, may be many years: but you who are on the verge of three score years and ten or have already passed that limit of human life must know that your remaining days must be few. What better season than the present is there then for you to pause and like Moses and Israel look back upon the scenes of your life that is past and forward upon the scenes that await you! It is my desire to assist you in this interesting contemplation. And let me first invite you to reflect upon some of the scenes you have enjoyed.

And here we may first remark how much reason you have for blessing God for your many temporal mercies. You may have seen many hardships and escaped many dangers - but it is the merciful right hand of God that has delivered you and borne you through them. And you may have seen much of sickness and pain yet what a cause for gratitude have you that God has treated all your sicknesses and so many times saved your life from destruction. While you have seen one friend after another and one neighbor after another drop into eternity in youth or in middle age so that now but few who began life with you are to be found you have been protected *from the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth as noonday. Though a thousand have fallen at your side and ten thousand at your right hand yet it does not come nigh you.*

Another cause you have for gratitude is that, *the lines have fallen to you in such pleasant places and that you have had so goodly an heritage.* You have not been called to cultivate the dreary and inhospitable regions of the extreme north nor to pine and wither under the parching skies of the south. Nor have you been compelled to wander through the wilderness among the ignorant and barbarous savages. But in this land of hills and vallies the pastures, *have been clothed with flocks and the valleys covered over with corn*, and rarely has the earth failed to pour forth an abundance of fruits to fill your storehouses and barns and to afford an abundant supply for man and beast. Here too have you possessed those means of instruction in human knowledge so well calculated to soften the native ferocity of man and to multiply his comforts and usefulness and here too have you for many years enjoyed the intercourse of kin and civilized neighbors and friends. O number how many millions of your fellow men are destitute of the ordinary comforts of life and grew up in perfect ignorance and know nothing of friendly intercourse and learn from hence who it is that thus maketh you to differ and how great is the debt of gratitude you owe so kind and beneficent a God.

But still more abundant and great have been your spiritual mercies. How long has been your day of grace! Others have had only a few years in which to prepare for eternity. But you have had more than half a century. What an immense number of prayers to God you have had an opportunity of making - how many precious seasons of communion with God and his Son Jesus Christ and of self-examination and meditation! How many Sabbaths have you been blessed with and how many sermons and exhortations have you heard! It has been your peculiar privilege to enjoy for more than fifty years the uninterrupted ministrations of one whose life has been the best comment upon his doctrines - and who now like yourselves being borne down with age and infirmity feels that the time draws nigh when he must die. You have had no false teachers to delude you from the simplicity there is in Christ nor any peculiar divisions among yourselves to operate as hindrances to your advancement in holiness. Every thing indeed has been favorable to your growth in grace. It has been your happy lot also to witness among this people a number of revivals of religion. You can doubtless remember the time and you can never forget how great was your joy when there was a general enquiry among the unregenerate, *what shall we do to be saved? And when many a converted spirit would cry out The arrows of the Almighty are within me the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit.* You have seen the day when the aisles of this house were filled with a multitude of rejoicing souls coming forward to confess their Redeemer before men.

And in such a day you could exclaim in the triumphant language of the Psalmist, *O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory.*

And now my aged fathers and mothers, shall I permit myself to enquire whether it is possible that one of you who have been blessed with so many and so distinguish opportunities for religious improvement have nevertheless remained to this late hour of life destitute of an interest in Christ? O the thought is overwhelming – and rather would I pass by the subject than endeavour to compute the awful account he has to render who has resisted the threatenings and promises of the Gospel three score years and ten. I would rather draw a veil over the final condition of such a man than to follow in imagination a gray headed sinner into the world of perdition and there see how much lower he lies in misery than Tyre and Sidon and how much fiercer the wrath of God burns upon him than upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

I invite you my venerable audience in the next place to look back and contemplate some of the scenes of affliction through which you have passed. I cannot indeed lay before you individual sorrows. *The heart knoweth his own bitterness.* And some of you may have been called to pass through scenes of distress whose recital would make every heart bleed. Perhaps some of you for months and even years have stood upon the very brink of the grave, full of tossings to and fro from morning to evening and from evening to morning and like Job *choosing strangling and death rather than life.* Or perhaps you have stood for months or years by the sick bed of your friends and seen one after another leave you at last to enter eternity. It is probable that there is not one of you indeed who has not been called to close the eyes of some dear friend - some wife or husband - brother or sister child or companion. Ah, which of you is there who has not many a time been called to such a trial as this! Which of you that has not buried almost every friend with whom you began life? When you look back upon the days of your childhood and recall to mind the companions of your youth how few of them are there which you have not followed to the grave. The race of men now in the full vigor of life around you are a new generation and you feel as if you were a stranger among them. How wonderful how mysterious the dispensations of providence by which you have been carried through so many changes and by which you have remained unsmitten though the arrows of death have been flying on every side of you and pierced the bosoms of so many of your neighbors and friends!

As you now stand as it were alone and survey the ruins of your generation and remember through how many trials God sustained you are you not astonished at the mercy of God even though you weep at the recollection of your departed friends and shudder at the scenes of deep distress you have been called to witness? For all those bereavements and all those sorrows were designed for your everlasting good. At the time they were not joyous but grievous yet do you not now see the fruit of them? Were they not the means of weaning you from the world of fastening your affections firmer upon God and of awakening you to a greater diligence in the cause of Christ? With David cannot you now exclaim, *before I was afflicted I went astray but now have I kept thy word.* If you have indeed improved aright your various trials and bereavements it will be for your joy and rejoicing through eternity that you were thus afflicted. But if you have not found these trials sanctified to you O how hard in this must be your hearts!

But ye fathers and mothers however great may have been your afflictions in your past days and however great may be your present infirmities and trials all these are near their end. Those eyes which have been so often dimmed in tears of sorrow will soon be dried up no more to weep. You already feel that world which has so long agitated your feelings to be losing its interest and losing its power to distress you by its disappointments and trials. You have but a few more afflictions to meet - but few more sighs to hear - but few more tears to shed. And your opportunities too for serving and worshipping

God on earth are almost at an end. You have almost done with the public services of God in this house where you have so long assembled to unite with your brethren in praise to God. You will hear but few more sermons and exhortations and when you have offered up a few more prayers your tongues will be silent and your hearts cold in the grave. For your age and infirmities daily remind you that, *the time draweth nigh when you must die*. Come then ye aged of this assembly and like the patriarch of old look with a steady eye upon that grave which is before you and that untrodden world you are about to enter.

You have no doubt too often contemplated upon death too often realized your mortality to be agitated by the thought of it. Let me then ask you with what feelings you look forward to a dying hour and to a day of judgment? The answer to this enquiry no doubt will greatly depend upon the manner in which you have improved the afflictions and mercies of your long lives. If you have improved these aright that is if they have been the means of giving you a new heart probably you look forward to the solemn scenes before you with composure and it maybe with ardent anticipations. Though it ought not to be forgotten that real Christians when they come to be borne down with the weaknesses and infirmities of old age sometimes find within them many dark and painful doubts to obscure the evening of their days and to render still darker the valley of death. But there are many who find amid all the infirmities of age a calm a settled and a triumphant hope that they shall soon see their Redeemer as he is and be seated at his right hand in heaven. And to such an one it must be a joyful view to look forward into eternity and to realize that in a very few days he shall be there - and all his infirmities will be succeeded by immortal youth and undecaying vigor. Soon will this feebleness and weakness of old age be forgotten and he will become as the angels who excel in strength. Never more will he feel the tear of sorrow stealing down his cheek nor the sigh of sorrow heaving his bosom - but joys unmingled and eternal will flow to him from the throne of God. Fresh and consoling indeed must be such anticipations to the old man who has become weary with the world and who expects no more permanent enjoyment beneath the sun.

And now ye fathers and mothers permit me to put an enquiry to you for the instruction of those of us who are middle aged and young. As you now stand upon the brink of eternity and have done with the bustle of the world how do the scenes and pursuits in which you have been engaged appear to you and what class of actions affords you the most pleasure? Some of you perhaps have labored diligently and for many years for the acquisition of riches - some perhaps in pursuit of honor and some of pleasure - and we would hope many of you have labored for your own and others salvation. And need I wait for an answer to determine how all your eager pursuits after the world now appear like the dreams of a bewildered imagination and with how much delight you recollect every service you have done for God and with how much regret you realize that you have done so little for the cause of Christ.

The world now appears to you comparatively vanity and religion appears to you all in all. O shall not the middle aged shall not we who are young and in eager chase after the world listen to this solemn lesson of experience sent back to us by those who are just entering eternity?

I have said to the aged before me that the time draweth nigh when they must die - I say not this to awaken needless fears - I speak only what they all speak and think almost daily. Yes their failing senses - their trembling limbs - their growing infirmities convince them that, *dust they are and unto dust shall they return*, and that when a few more days or years are, *come they shall go the way of all the earth*. Doubtless many of us who are young will be called first - yet we know not how soon - but we do know that you who have already been three score years and ten must ere long resign your spirits into the hands of the God who gave them. Soon must you stand before the tribunal of Christ and give a long account of your blessings and afflictions. Soon will your aged pastor meet you there and thus will the long series of his faithful instructions be held up before you - sermon after sermon - exhortation after

exhortation and prayer after prayer and the improvement you have made of the decisions of the judgment day can he alone declare. O that he may find many of your souls in that day shining as jewels in his immortal crown. And can I indulge the thought for a moment that one of you before will not be found at the bar of God in the crown of his rejoicing? O it is too dreadful an idea to dwell upon that a man in a Gospel land should resist for three score years and ten all the promises and threatenings of the bible. And I will not dwell upon it even did I suppose (which God foretold) that there is such an one present. For what impression could my feeble voice make upon a heart which has been hardening for more than half a century in sin and has stood proof against the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell.

I have said to the aged that the time of their departure is at hand. And what seat is there this day vacant among them? O there was one among you the last Sabbath uniting in our worship who now lies lifeless in yonder dwelling and who as we humbly hope is now joining in a purer worship in the temple of God in heaven. *He has come to his grave in a full age like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth; yea saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them.* What a comment is this providence upon the text and how it enforces with more than mortal emphasis the truths we have been exhibiting!

Thus one of the fathers of our church after another is dropping into eternity: and soon all these venerable pillars in our Zion will be gone. Who then shall stand up for the Lord among this people when the enemy cometh in like a flood? I stretch forth my heart to you ye middle aged and to you ye young and plead with you, *to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* I appeal to you in the name of this church and entreat you to come forward and fill up the places of your fathers and catch their falling mantles. I appeal to you on behalf of your own souls and by the bitter agonies of your Redeemer beseech you to fly to him for salvation. I appeal to you on behalf of myself. And now that the fathers on whom I leaned are passing into the grave I throw myself into your arms and upon your mercy and beseech you by the solemn responsibilities that lie upon me to come forward to hold up my hands by your prayers and examples lest I grow weary and abandon this part of the walls of Jerusalem to the inroads of the enemy. I call to you in behalf of these your aged fathers and mothers before you and by their grey hairs by their tears and their prayers for you I beseech you to give them before they die the exalted joy of seeing you come forth decidedly in support of that religion they love and which is now their only support. O do not embitter their few remaining days with the agonizing thought that you are out of Christ. This O this is a thought that will plant daggers in their bosoms and bring down the grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. After all their prayers and exertions for you for many years the reflection that you have not hope will fill them with anguish indescribable. To see you corrected is all they wait for in this world. And the fear that after they must leave you unconverted is what fills the thoughts of their hour with distress. And they linger on the shores of time only to catch the news of your salvation that they may bear it to heaven. O what an agonizing scene will it be if after all as they see you come around their dying bed they are compelled to realize that you have no hope and as they stretch out their withered hands to grasp you for the last time how can they pronounce - how can you hear the everlasting farewell!

And now ye aged I turn once more to you. Probably this is the last time we shall all meet together this side of the bar of God. Accept my earnest wishes and prayers that you may find your few remaining days softened by the bright hope of eternal glory and that you may find your Redeemer to comfort and support you amid the trials that are before you. Finally when nature shall yield to the silent ravages of death may you be gently released from your long warfare and conducted by angels to Abraham's bosom.

But while God shall continue to keep alive the lamp of life we do most earnestly beseech your fervent and earnest prayers for Zion in this place. O if your eyes are not yet bedimmed with age turn them around upon this great assembly and see how many there are in this house - how many of your own descendants who profess hope of a happy immortality. My fathers these souls must not perish - they must be wept for - they must be prayed for. And we do look to you with confidence for your continued intercessions in their behalf. It is a day when prayer is heard almost before it is offered - and how would it soften the pillow of a death bed to know that a great multitude of these precious souls around you had fled to a Saviour! Like Simeon of old you would exclaim in the ardor of a triumphant gratitude – *Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*

Delivered

At Conway October 1821

## Sermon 78 History of Revivals

[Sermon No. 78, "History of Revivals," John 12:8, 1821 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 12]

John 12:8

*The poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.*

The occasion that drew from Christ this expression was the anointing of his feet with costly ointment by Mary. The avaricious Judas protested against the waste and declared that this ointment might have, *been got for three hundred pence and given to the poor. But this he said*, as the evangelist witnesses, *not because he cared for the poor but because he was a thief and had the bag and bare what was therein.* What an exact picture is this of the niggardly spirit which in every age under the pretense of greater benevolence objects against the bestowment of liberal charities for the promotion of the kingdom of Christ.

But to animadvert on such a topic is not our intention in this discourse. It is the reply of Christ to which we would direct our attention. *Then said Jesus let her alone against the day of my burying hath she done this. For the poor always ye have with you but me ye have not always.* As much as to say I shall soon leave you: and while I remain think it not a waste if my followers for whom I have done so much should even at some expense pay some peculiar regard. Soon you will see me no more and then you will have time to attend to the poor who are always with you. Such a gentle reproof would have reached the heart of any other man but a Judas.

Though Christ has left the world and is no more visibly present on earth yet is he in reality in the midst of his faithful followers to the end of the world. Then however it may be said that he is not with them always for their lives are short in comparison with eternity and therefore as they have to prepare for eternity during the momentary period it would seem they ought to improve with peculiar diligence the opportunity they have of learning in the school of Christ.

And so with unregenerate men Christ is present by his Spirit but not always. However little they may realize it their day of will soon be past and when once the thread of life is cut the Spirit abandons them forever. There is such a thing too – O sinners be not faithless but believing there is such a thing as a man's day of grace being terminated before his day of life. And when men resist great light it requires but a short period to grieve away the Spirit of Christ forever. There is a peculiar propriety therefore in saying to unregenerate men, *The poor ye have always with you but Christ ye have not always.*

The text however leads us to consider those seasons when Christ is more peculiarly present with his followers and with all men. For when he told his disciples that they could not have him always with them he referred to his bodily visible presence: for after his resurrection he assured them that he, *would be with them always even to the end of the world.* That is evidently he would be present with them always by his Spirit that holy Comforter he promised to send down after his ascension. And to this day the followers of Christ have uniformly witnessed that he has been faithful to his promise. Still however the Spirit does not visit the believer or the sinner with an uniform influence but there are some special



seasons when he manifests himself more peculiarly both to saints and sinners. And we shall now proceed to point out the most important of those particular times when Christ by his Spirit is more remarkably present with men.

In the first place the followers of Christ often find it a season when he is periodically present with them when they commemorate his dying love or when engaged in secret prayer or meditation. This is agreeable to the experience of almost every Christian. Sometimes I have a view of their depravity at such a time that well nigh overwhelms them. Sometimes they see more forcibly than ever before the odiousness of sin in the sight of God. At other times the glory and perfection of the Divine character are manifested to them in a striking manner. Sometimes Christ appears uncommonly glorious and his character supremely lovely. At one time there is a sweet and delightful calm spread over the soul producing joys unspeakable and full of glory; at another time a remarkable fervency and delight is experienced in prayer. Now most certainly the Christianism ought to look upon these as privileged moments and to even remember that though other duties may be attended to at any time Christ will not be with him always in this peculiar and delightful sense. Therefore would it not be madness for him at such times to neglect to improve them diligently and to break away from such delightful services to enter into the concerns of the world. Who but an avaricious Judas could reprove him for spending more than time than usual in secret prayer private devotions and meditation? (Probably many Christians greatly grieve the Spirit.) How much do Christians often lose by neglecting to improve such precious moments.

The next particular season in which Christ is peculiarly present with men is when they experience great changes in their outward circumstances. Thus upon the death of a near friend or upon the loss of great possessions or upon experiencing some severe disappointment the Christian will find his thoughts powerfully drawn to contemplate the things of eternity and will feel within him an unusual disposition to pray. And at such times he ought sincerely to improve diligently these seasons that they may lead him to growth in grace if he thus apparently interferes with ordinary duties. Because these may be performed afterward but a disposition to pray and meditate upon eternity will soon be gone. Christ will not remain always. And if the Christian refuse to pay him peculiar honors and listen intently to him when he is present especially if he turn away and prefer the wrath, of this world to his instructions, no wonder if the Christian be left to darkness and if it were possible to final apostasy.

Impenitent men also during the season just mentioned are favored with the peculiar presence of Christ. When afflicted or disappointed they too have their thoughts turn more upon religion and feel a disposition to pray. And it is not the part of wisdom at such a period to neglect for a time secular affairs and impose the precious presence of Christ by prayer praying and meditating much upon heaven and hell upon God's law and their sinfulness remembering that Christ is not with them always and that if they neglect him with who he favored them with his special presence they may plead in vain for his return when the day of their calamity shall come.

The third season in which Christ is peculiarly present with man is when he pours out the Holy Spirit upon particular regions and awakens convicts and converts sinners and arouses Christians. This is usually called a revival of religion. We have passed over the two preceding heads of the discourse more rapidly than we might have more time for attending to this. And we shall first give a general history of revivals – then secondly consider their effects and thirdly their direction.

The history of the most powerful and extensive revivals of religion that ever happened is contained in the Old and New Testaments. We pass by those that occurred among the Jews while in the wilderness

and also those happening during the reigns of David and Solomon especially when the latter dedicated the temple. In the reign of Asa religion was at its lowest ebb so that for *a long season*, as the historian says, *Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priesthood without law*. But when the prophet Isaiah faithfully warned Asa of their awful state, *the king gathered together all Judah and Benjamin and the strangers with them. And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul. That whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death whether small or great whether man or woman. And they swear unto the Lord with a loud roar and with shouting - and with trumpets and with cornets. And all Judah rejoices at the oath for they had sworn with all their heart and sought him with their whole desire and he was found of them and the Lord gave them rest round about.*

Before many years however the Jews relapsed into their former state of stupidity and idolatry and the rising generations were ignorant of God. But in the reign of Jehoshaphat the successor of Asa another powerful outpouring of the Spirit was experienced. Jehoshaphat destroyed the remnants of idolatry and sent princes and Levites to teach the people in the cities. *And they taught in Judah and had the book of the law of the Lord with them and went about throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people. And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah so that they made now war against Jehoshaphat.* How powerful must have been this work of the Holy Spirit which could strike an awe into other nations and they to Pagans! Yet even in this day we often see something of the same effect from a revival in restraining the wicked round about.

There were also revivals in the reigns of Jehoash and Uzziah – and a very remarkable and thorough one in the reign of Hezekiah. This prince seeing the desolation of God's sanctuary calls upon the priests and, *they went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it to carry it abroad into the brook Kidron. Next they set about preparing the people by prayer and sacrifices for keeping a solemn passover. And Hezekiah rejoiced and all the people that God had prepared the people for the thing was done suddenly.* After this the passover was kept solemnly seven days, *offering peace offerings and confessions to the Lord God of their Fathers.* Yet so sensible were they of their sins and backslidings that, *the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days and they kept other seven days with gladness then the priests and Levites arose and blessed the people and their voice was heard and their prayers came up to his holy dwelling place even up to heaven.* O my brethren had we been as faithful as these Jews in keeping the passover other seven days ere this our voice would have been heard and our prayer have come up to God's holy dwelling place even unto heaven. And as the passover was succeeded by the destruction of idolatry throughout the land and the overthrow of all their enemies so would our prayers be followed by the conversions of multitudes, *who now serve and worship the creature more than the Creator.*

The Jews during this long captivity in Babylon had become stupid and insensible to true religion. On their return a powerful revival commenced among them through the instrumentality of Nehemiah and Ezra. When Nehemiah after he wept and mourned in public and prayed certain prayers came to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls he found powerful enemies to the undertaking - *And they laughed as to scorn, says Nehemiah, and despised us and said what is this thing that you do? Will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I and said unto them the God of heaven he will prosper as therefore we his servants will arise and build; but you have no portion nor right nor memorial in Jerusalem.* And the God of heaven did prosper them for they proceeded prayerfully feeling then entire dependance on him. And when the wall was completed were assembled and for seven days Ezra continued to read the law of God to them. On the eighth day was a solemn assembly and the *people were assembled with fasting and with sackclothes*

*and earth upon them and they stood up in their place and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day and another fourth part of the day they confessed and worship the Lord their God.* After this humiliation the people and priests entered into a solemn covenant with God and then they proceeded to put away their strange wives and to reform their conduct on the Sabbath - so that probably few revivals of religion have produced effects so powerful and permanent.

We pass next to the N. Testament. And the earliest special outpouring of the Spirit there recorded was during the ministry of John the Baptist. *He baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.* And though it must have been very unpalatable to that race whom John himself called a generation of vipers to be called upon to repent and to bring forth works meet for repentance yet for some reason or other the evangelist says that *there went out to him all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan confessing their sins.* It must have been the special influence of Gods Spirit that could have brought so many to adopt a course so unwelcome to their feelings and to confess their sins to one so plain and unsparing as John.

The book of Acts contains the history of a series of the most interesting and wonderful revivals ever witnessed. You all remember the day of Pentecost - how those very Jews who only fifty days before had crucified Christ now listened to his despised disciples proving that he was the very Christ and how when Peter without equivocation charged them with the murder of Christ they were pricked in their hearts and cried out, *Men and brethren what shall we do?* What a wonderful change did that single sermon of Peter produced upon these hardhearted obstinate Jews. O it was the Spirit of God sent home his word like so many barbed arrows - causing a wound which none but the great Physician of souls could heal. And 3000 of them submitted to God that very day and received new hearts.

Soon after this astonishing outpouring of the Spirit Peter again address the unbelieving multitude in a part of the temple and by the same argument he brought a still greater multitude to submit even five thousand. Such powerful works of grace as these aroused the malice of those who hated the cause of Christ and though the chief priest and rulers reprovved them and threatened them and finally thrust them into prison yet still the works went on and the cause of Christ prospered and numbers were daily added to the church of such as should be saved. The persecution however at length became so violent that the disciples were scattered abroad into various regions and thereupon their preaching the doctrine of the cross extensive revivals succeeded. There was one in Phoenicia another in Cyprus and a third more extensive in Antioch. Soon after also in that city and in the neighboring region a second outpouring of the Spirit attended the preaching of Paul and Barnabas an historian says, *as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* After this another gracious influence of the Spirit was manifested when Paul preached Christ in Thessalonica: and as usual a violent opposition succeeded although some of the Jews believed, *of the devout Greeks a great multitude and of the chief women not a few.* At Bena also a work of grace went on for a time without opposition until the opposers in Thessalonica came hither and stirred up the people - although not a few says the historian believed. Paul preached liver likewise a single sermon at Athens which was carried home to the consciences of some who believed and came unto him. After this under the bold ministrations of this same Apostle an extensive and long continuing revival took place in Corinth. At Ephesus too the labors of Paul were abundantly blessed in the midst of much opposition, *so that the word of God grew mightily and prevailed.* In Greece, Macedonia and Asia Minor the works of God went on under the faithful preaching of Paul. But we have not time to be more particular.

But revivals of religion did not terminate with the days of the apostles. The church has had since that time many a period of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. By means of these the Gospel was

rapidly spread into almost every part of the earth: and though in later days there was a great and almost universal declension of religion yet in the 16th century the Spirit of God gave remarkable efficacy to the preaching of many of the reformers not only in Germany but in France Sudetenland, Holland Denmark the Low Countries and in Great Britain. A very extraordinary work of grace took place in the west part of Scotland in the year 1625. In 1630 during the communion season in a small town in Scotland (Shotts) the wonders of the day of Pentecost seemed to have returned and nearly 500 are said to have been awakened most of whom gave good evidence in their subsequent lives that they were born of God. In 1838 Scotland was again remarkably visited with the special presence of God. In 1628 in the north part of Ireland a revival occurred which is described as, *one of the largest manifestations of the Spirit one of the most solemn times of the outpouring thereof since the days of the Apostles*. And during the ravages of the plague in London in 1665 a powerful work was carried on by which thousands were hopefully converted.

Ever since his first settlement of this country there has been a succession of revivals in it. God in former days remarkably blessed the preaching of such men as Whitfield, Prince, Stoddard, Edwards, Tennent, and Brainard. Between the years 1720 and 1740 this part of N. England and Connecticut experienced a remarkable refreshing from the presence of the Lord as the following excerpt from the writings of President Edwards will show - *I hope, says he, that more than three hundred souls were savingly brought home to Christ in this town (Northampton) in the space of half a year. In the month of March new people in South Hadley began to be received with a deep concern about the things of religion which soon became very universal. About the same time it began to break forth in the west part of Suffield where it has also been very great. It next appeared at Sunderland and soon overspread the town and I believe was for a season no not less remarkable than it was here. About the same time it began to appear in the part of Deerfield called Green River and afterwards filled the town and there has been a glorious works there. It also began to be manifest in the south part of Hatfield and the works of God has been great there. There has been also a very general awakening at West Springfield and Longmeadow. And in Enfield there has been no small concern amongst some that before had been very loose persons. Something of this works likewise appeared in the first precinct in Springfield. And in Hadley old town there gradually appeared so much of the work of God on souls as at another time would have been thought worthy of particular notice. For a short time it was also a very great and general concern of the like nature at Northfield.*

Soon after this extensive revival so much interest was felt in the subject that a weekly paper was published in Boston wholly devoted to the history of revivals. Since that time during the 50 years that have elapsed numerous other powerful works of grace have been observed in this county which we have not time to mention. But probably no period of our history was ever so much distinguished by the extraordinary influences of the Spirit as the present (than the year 1820). During that particular year more than 7000 have been added to the communion of the Presbyterian Church in this country - most of whom were the fruits of revivals. In the single state of Connecticut not less than (50 towns have been visited and not less than) 5000 have hopefully passed from death unto life and in the state of Vermont not less than 2000.

*[Here there is one paragraph that has been crossed out in pencil]*

This is a brief history of the special outpourings of the Spirit of God in all ages of the church. And these statements have occupied so much time that the remainder of the subject must be deferred till the after part of the day. We cannot close the discourse however without making one inference which forces itself upon the mind when contemplating candidly the preceding statements. And we learn from this

subject my hearers that there is a general resemblance between the revivals of religion in every age of the church.

They have been alike in the manner of their commencement. God has first stirred up one or more of his servants to attempt by prayer and fasting and exhortation a reformation of abuses and to bring men to submit to the truth. The flame has communicated from one heart to another until most or all the children of God were united in the great work.

Again revivals have been alike in their direction and efforts. Their duration has only been short and their effect has been to advance Christians in holiness - to detect hypocrites - to bring sinners into the kingdom of God and to awaken the opposition and harden the hearts of the impenitent who are not subdued. There may indeed have been much of enthusiasm and delusion during some revivals: for the special influences of the Spirit may be abused as well as the mercies. Yet never we believe have such seasons passed without awakening some Christians or detecting some hypocrites or converting some sinners. And this uniformity of effect in all revivals shows the work to have revealed the same origin and that Divine and thus to be of God. And while such are the effects who that loves Zion will not rejoice in it and shout grace grace unto it?

*[The last few pages seem to be an addendum, possibly added at a later time]*

The subject suggests many important reflections especially as regards revivals of religion. But can mention only a few.

In the first place the history of revivals proves their identity of origin and nature in all ages

(see last page of sermon number 78)

In the second place the short continuance of most revivals is a feature of fearful interest.

This is referred to in the text, *The poor ye have always with you: but me ye have not always*. And so have men found in every age. In all the revivals mentioned in the Old Testament the religious interest soon began to decline and iniquity seemed to be gaining ground although in reality, religion had made an advance upon wickedness. On the day of Pentecost the most powerful part of the work to communicate in the space of a few hours and though for some days afterwards there was frequent instances of conversion yet nothing like the abundant shower of the first days was witnessed subsequently. And in several of the succeeding revivals in Thessalonica Lystia and other places a few hours must have ended the work since the apostles were driven away once and the preaching of Christ strictly prohibited. All therefore who did not submit in those few hours were left in their sins and probably most of them never heard the Gospel again. In later times than that persecution has caused revivals of somewhat longer continuance: and yet they are usually felt in the greatest power only a few weeks or months and rarely continue for years. Many charge their brevity to the unfaithfulness of Christians and doubtless in some cases justly. But wherever the fault lie or whether in all cases that be any the fact is acknowledged by all that these seasons are brief. And it is a fearful fact. Some indeed regard this fact as evidence against revivals considered as a work of God: for they cannot believe that he would suspend the salvation of man upon a few days of excitement. But they might object with equal reason against the brevity of man's whole probation which in many instances is really only a few weeks or months. And as to entertainment certainly men are more apt to attend to religion when others do and are continually talking about it than when they hear nothing save the services of the Sabbath and the dead life of

worldliness is not muffled by religion during the week. Besides if revivals be a most powerful means of grace as they certainly are should we not expect that God would make such opportunities brief: for a week spent in the midst of such a work is equivalent as a trial of character to years of the ordinary means of grace: and therefore it is unnecessary to continue these special and powerful means for a long period. If a man resist them even for a few days he would certainly resist ordinary means for years and therefore his character is as much doomed in one case as the other. This neglect of the special means used during a revival will assess as effectively shut his mouth in the final judgment as his neglect of ordinary means for many years.

I am led by these remarks to notice the fearfully rapid development of character during a revival. If this development affected only temporal interests we could regard it almost without emotion. But it takes hold on eternity. And while we cannot but rejoice to see some beginning that new race that will give them the final everlasting victory over sin and sorrow how distressing to see others as the work is drawing to a close gradually losing their interest in the subject and settling back into the iron slumber of impenitence and unregeneracy. They may not be conscious themselves of the rapid change their moral feelings are undergoing but the experienced Christian sees it and it fills him with intense anxiety especially when he sees evidence that the Divine Spirit is silently withdrawing his influence.

In vain does he labor openly to persuade them to come at once to the great decision and to receive the offered boon at the eleventh hour. But alas he usually labors against obstacles nearly invincible: and with finding it vain to labor anymore for their conversion he takes refuge in the sovereign will of God and exclaims to Father for so it seemeth good in thy sight. He feels certain that God will be glorified though Israel be not gathered in yet it is one of the hardest lessons of submission the Christian ever learns to be willing that God should be glorified in the everlasting destruction of those whom he loves.

Delivered

At Conway November 1821

At Heath November 1822

At Amherst College April 1831

At Amherst College April 1838

At Amherst College April 1839

At Amherst College 1842

At Amherst College April 1846

## Sermon 79 Effects of Revivals

[Sermon No. 79, "Effects of Revivals," John 12:8, 1821 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 12]

John 12:8

*The poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.*

An attempt was made in the former part of the day as you recollect to point out in considering this text those seasons in life when Christ is peculiarly present. First of these seasons is at the communion table - the second when men experience great changes in their outward circumstances and the third is during a revival of religion. We passed rapidly over the first two divisions of the subject in order to find room for a more particular consideration of the third. The proposal was first to give a general history of revivals which we have already executed. The second subdivision proposed to consider the effects of revivals and the third their duration.

It is impossible for any man of whatever sentimental sentiments feelings or habits to witness an outpouring of God's Spirit without having an effect produced upon his mind. Whether he be a real Christian or one resting in a false hope or an unregenerate man he cannot escape the influence of revival if he be a Christian it may indeed be said that he experiences a refreshing in his own bosom. He is led at first to examine his own heart and he is astonished to find in what a state of stupidity he has lived and how far he has backslidden from God. This discovers to him more forcibly than ever the dreadful depravity of his heart and so deep does his corruption appear that he is led seriously and oftentimes most painfully to doubt whether there can be any love to God in his bosom. This ingratitude rises before him in such a tremendous aspect that the spark of holiness within him is dead and often for work weeks and months he is under deep convictions for sin before he obtains relief. And his exercises are sometimes as distressing as at his first conversion. And though after a time he usually obtain some relief yet the effect of such a view as this is to keep him extremely humble before God and make him to feel as did Paul when he said, *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ.*

Another effect of a work of divine grace upon the Christian is an earnest desire for the conversion of sinners. He has now a more distinct and vivid impression of their alarming situation. He views them to be as they really are suspended (by the brittle thread of life) over a lake of eternal fire - and yet they remain careless and thoughtless in this state of perpetual jeopardy. The Christian feels as if he must take some measures to arouse them to a sense of their danger. He feels as if they must not perish while it is so easy to escape. And when he finds them to resist every warning and entreaty his anxiety and distress for them are increased. For this resistance shows such an awful state of insensibility and stubbornness as awakens all his compassion and sympathy. He had believed all along it is true that impenitent sinners were exposed to everlasting burnings: but now he realizes this and actually sees them in imagination amid the agonies of that awful world.

A necessary effect of such anxiety for impenitent sinners is a spirit of earnest fervent prayer for them. The real Christian knows that they can never be rescued from a state so dreadful but by the arm of Almighty God. Therefore does *he make supplication for them and with strong crying and tears unto him*

*that is able save.* He had before prayed for the unregenerate in his family and in public but there were formal prayers made in so languid unfeeling a manner that every one who heard them see that he was not in good earnest for sinners. But now when under the influence of a revival you will perceive in the Christians prayers for them and increased earnestness - a certain agonizing spirit which may be called wrestling. And were you permitted to look into his closet you would see still more of this fervency and this prayerful agony.

Such an earnest desire for the salvation immortal souls as we have described as the fruit of a revival will not terminate in ardent prayers merely. It will extend to the conversation. A man who feels deeply a subject will converse upon it with such an air of earnestness as manifests that his whole soul is engaged in it. Unless circumstances forbid we we always converse upon that which is uppermost in our minds most deeply interests us. If then we feel an ardent desire for the salvation of immortal souls we shall not fail on every proper occasion to introduce the subject to them and affectionately endeavor to win them to Christ. And especially when Christians meet one another their conversation will be chiefly upon the subject of religion if they feel their own stupidity and the value of souls around them. They will *confess their faults one to another*, and feel desirous to be searched by one another. If thus during a time of revival of religion you meet a professed Christian and during one or two hours (a long) conversation he says nothing or very little on that particular subject you may safely conclude that he does not feel interested in the works. President Edwards in his account of the revival in this part of the country eighty years ago says - *All other talks but about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by; all the conversation in all companies and upon all occasions was upon these things, only unless so much as was necessary for people carrying on their ordinary secular business. Other discourse then of the things of religion would scarcely be tolerated in any company.* Alas! my hearers how much the reverse of this description is the case with most of us at this time in this place! And it is this more than anything else that convinces me that this church are not just yet prepared for an extensive revival of religion.

*[The following paragraphs are crossed out in pencil]*

Another effect produced upon the Christian by a revival of religion is to render more interesting and precious his communion seasons. This is a necessary effort of that state of feeling we have already described. Never does the believer come in a more acceptable manner to celebrate in the eucharist the dying love of Christ than when he feels his great unworthiness and has a deep sense of his vileness and feels a brokenness of heart and spirit. And the effect of a revival is to produce such a state of healing. This prepares the heart for realizing the astonishing love of Christ in dying for such vile and grateful beings as men - and the absolute need of his soul of the justification of Christ's blood and Spirit. To this precious fountain he flies while the symbols of his Redeemer's death are before him - and most earnestly prays that he may have that precious blood applied to cleanse his conscience. Then too with an unconquerable resolution does he renew his covenant and determine by the grace of God assisting him to commence a new course of life and no longer to crucify the Redeemer afresh and to wound him in the house of his friends. Thus does he gather new strength to go forth to fight the battles of the Lord and to trample under his feet the enemies of his soul.

It may be too that during such a communion season which he commenced with great brokenness of heart that the believer may have such a vivid impression thrown in upon his soul of the glory of the divine character such a deep sense of the love of Christ - such an unwavering trust in God as will fill him with peace and joy and seem a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem above. And if at such a moment his thoughts are turned upon the many of his friends and acquaintances who live without God and without hope O what an earnest desire does it create within him for their



salvation and how fervently does he offer up the secret ejaculation that God would have mercy upon them.

And now my brethren of this church we are about to approach the table of Christ this afternoon under the circumstances above mentioned. For however stupid we may have been still God has been processing out his Spirit in this place in a special manner. And now perhaps we can determine the state of our feelings in regard to this revival by the exercises of our minds this afternoon. If we come to the table as insensible as we have done at many past communions - what shall I say? Shall I say that we have no reason to consider ourselves Christians? I will only say that this will be an evidence that God is about forsaking this work and about leaving sinners in this place to final impenitence.

Another effect of a revival on professors of religion which I have room just to mention is a revival of their discipline. In times of stupidity individual members who do not live agreeably to the Gospel are suffered to go on undisturbed. But when the Spirit of God comes to search the heart Christians are led to enquire whether the *time is not come when judgment must begin at the house of God*, and whether it be not their duty as Paul commands the Corinthians, *not to keep company if any man that is called a brother be a fornication fornicator or covetous or an idolater - or railer or a drunkard or an extortioner: with such an one no not to eat*.

The second class of persons on whom a revival of religion often has an effect is the self-deceived professor. We do not include those who have made an hypocritical profession that is those who professed to him religion when they knew they had it not: for such persons are generally given over to such hardness of heart and blindness of mind that nothing will arouse them but the shout of the archangel and the trump of God. We mean those who though sincere in their professions of religion were deluded. And the obvious reason why they are often undelivered during a revival is that the Spirit of God stirs up men at the time to deeper heart searchings than they have before attained. And it is not an uncommon thing for such persons at such a time really to experience a saving change of heart. What a mercy is it in God to awaken and convert them to often they have so long eaten and drunk unworthily at his table not discerning the Lords body!

The third and largest class of men on whom a revival produces some sort of effect are the impenitent. These effects however are very different on different persons. But even the most determined infidel will feel something when a powerful work of Grace is going on around him. It will at least make him uneasy - to see many of his former companions his side and embracing that religion he believes to be a delusion. And it will not be pleasant to him to witness a solemnity and an anxiety on the subject among those he daily meets.

On such persons however and on many others a work of divine grace often produces more powerful effect. It stirs them up to a most resolute and bitter opposition. Amongst the numerous revivals mentioned in the old and new testaments we do not recollect but few where this was not the case. You will recollect Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem and many others opposed Nehemiah and *how they laughed him to scorn and despised him* - and what stratagems they laid to decoy him from the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem which if it should be effected they will know would prepare the way for a reformation in religion and morals as it in fact did through the protection of God. You remember also that on the day of Pentecost while some were in doubt, *others mocking said, these men are full of new wine*. At the second revival in Jerusalem although five thousand were converted yet opposition rose to such a height that the Chief Priests Captains of the temple and Sadducees laid hands on the apostles and put them in prison. And at length after having stoned Stephen for his faithful preaching they persecuted the other

believers so violently that they were compelled to flee for their lives. Violent opposition and persecution were produced by the revivals in Lystra, Thessalonica and Ephesus. At Berea indeed for a time men instead of opposing the works, *searched the scriptures to know whether these things were so*; but in the end they were roused to opposition.

Exactly the same Spirit that manifested itself in the days of the apostles has attended almost every outpouring of the Spirit since that time especially if the work were powerful. We have not time to particularize: but will just quote an extract from President Edwards' account of the revival in this vicinity 60 years ago - *When this work first appeared says he and was so extraordinarily carried on amongst us in the winter others round about us deemed not to know what to make of it and there were many that scoffed and ridiculed it; and some compared what we called conversion to certain distempers.*

And here we may remark that often the man who is most violent in opposing such work is himself soon to become a subject of it. Nay that very opposition arises from an effort to lull asleep the voice of conscience and to quench the stirrings of the Spirit. Never was man more bitter against a revival than Paul. He was exceedingly mad against those whose preaching was the means of it. But when he went to Damascus a voice from heaven showed him what he never before suspected that he was persecuting Christ and that he was fighting against God - though he vented his fury against man. Suffice it to say he was subdued by this discovery and returned from Damascus as zealous for Christ as he had before been opposed to him. And so has it happened to thousands equally bitter against the truth.

From the general fact that revivals of religion usually stir up a deep rooted opposition among many of the impenitent we can see the reason why such a work sometimes is succeeded by the dismissal of faithful ministers and a prostration of all the ordinary means of grace. The fact thus far in the world has ever been that a majority in every place have remained unconverted during a revival. Even in Jerusalem though thousands were regenerated in a day this was the case and this remaining majority are doubtless in all instances rendered if not opposers yet more insensible to the subject of religion and unless God restrain them they will certainly take means to prevent any future revivals by destroying religious institutions. Let those who object to revivals from a fear of such consequences remember that worse effects than these attended every outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the Apostles. And yet when these holy men were driven from one place they immediately set about promoting the same works of grace in another. Let this fact also serve as a lesson to us who are in the ministry if through fear of being driven from our places we are disposed to relax our exertions for promoting promoting a revival.

But we proceed briefly to notice some other the effects of the work of grace upon impenitent men. For thank God the great majority of such at the present day are disposed to favor instead of opposing such a work and they even have a desire to be sharing in it - a mark of preparation by no means unfavorable. Such at the commencement of a revival find upon their minds more than usual solemnity. They feel more the vanity of the world - are disposed to enquire more concerning the way of salvation - are more frequent in their attendance upon the means of grace. They break off partially or wholly from any known habits of sin. They begin more earnestly to read the Scriptures and oftentimes commence a habit of secret prayer. Beyond this point however multitudes never go - and when the revival is gone they return with hardened hearts to their former sins and their former neglect of God.

But some of these have a still more powerful influence exerted upon them at such a season. They are brought to have a most alarming view of their danger and to have such an anxiety for their souls that they cannot conceal it but are lead to cry out, *what shall we do to be saved?* Beyond this point however many do not proceed; and after remaining a few months in an anxious state, the special influences of

the Spirit are withdrawn and they return to their former wallowing in the mire of this world.

Yet some proceed during a revival still farther. They not only are convicted for sin and are distressed for it but actually believe themselves to have put their trust in the Saviour and for a time they go on their way rejoicing: but these *are they that have not root in themselves but endure for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word by and by they are offended.*

There are always some however during a real revival of religion proceed still farther than this. They do really submit to the righteousness of Christ and receive new hearts and bring forth fruit *some thirty some sixty and some an hundred fold.* And if but a single soul is really converted during a revival it is worth all the exertions and all the prayers that can be made. *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

But we hasten in the last place to consider the duration of the revival of religion. And we may safely assert that it is uniformly short. *The poor ye have always with you but Christ - ye have not always.* All the revivals mentioned in Scripture and these as we have already seen are many, were of short continuance. In all the cases mentioned in the Old Testament we find that religion soon began to decline and iniquity and idolatry to prevail. On the day of Pentecost the most powerful part of the work terminated in the space of a few hours - and though there were daily some new instances of conversion yet there was nothing like the abundant shower of the first day witnessed afterwards. And in several of the succeeding outpourings of the Spirit that took place in Thessalonica Lythra etc. a few hours must have ended the works because the apostles were driven from those places in the preaching of Christ's cross prohibited. All therefore who did not submit in a few hours were left to harden their hearts. What a mercy is it that in these latter days revivals often continue several months and in some rare instances over a year! Yet it is usually the case that the influence of the Spirit appears to operate most extensively only a few weeks and then to most impenitent men it is said, *he that is unjust let him be unjust still and he that is filthy let him be filthy still.*

And my hearers we think that we can in part discover the reason why the special impulses of God's Spirit are continued no longer. For if God grant to individuals in a particular place more powerful motives for embracing religion and operate more deeply upon their hearts than he does upon others it would seem to be but justice but that more powerful influence should be exerted only for a shorter period and if men continue to resist this more powerful influence only during this short period they do in fact resist as much as others who are favored only with ordinary influences during their whole lives. And if this be true how rapidly my hearers does it show impenitent men to harden in sin during a revival. They resist so much greater light - and so much more powerful admonitions of the Spirit - that unless their hearts yield they are becoming rapidly more opposed to religion and God and more ripe for destruction.

And does not the subject my hearers show that it is important and right that when Christ is especially present in any place by his Spirit that people both Christians and sinners should pay some special attention to his presence? When Christ honored Mary with a visit she anointed his feet with precious ointment as a token of her peculiar attachment. And shall his disciples at the present day manifest by no extraordinary efforts of joy at the gracious visit of their Master with whom they hope to spend eternity? Shall they not even intercede more earnestly with him that he would heal the spiritually rich among them? Shall they refuse to spend a few extra hours each week in prayer secret and public? Should a friend who was an equal pay them a visit they would not suffer every little trifling worldly concern to prevent their paying him some peculiar respect. And can they will they refuse specially to honor the visit of the Lord of glory?

And ought not be the impenitent too to improve assiduously the presence of Christ among them when he comes to seek and to save that which was lost? When the blind beggar Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by he began, *to cry out and say Jesus thou the son of David have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more a great deal. Thou Son of David have mercy on me.*

So if impenitent men appear to be anxious during a revival and to devote much time to reading prayer and attendance upon the means of grace many are ready to cry out that they are neglecting their business and minding their estates. But Bartimaeus knew that if Christ was once beyond the reach of his voice he never should recover his sight and therefore he persisted to cry aloud to him and thus obtain relief. So while Christ is passing by during a revival unregenerate men ought to remember that that is the favorable moment and that if they neglect this opportunity Christ may never pass by them again. And what if it should be the means of their losing some good bargains. Is it not better to lose this than their souls?

*[A new page has been placed over the original]*

My hearers we well know that Christ has been specially present with us in this institution for weeks and what lesson does the history of revivals teach us? Why if any Christian wishes his soul awakened and purified and if any sinner desires to be converted he must make the application to the Redeemer without delay. You may not believe this now: and may vainly fancy that tomorrow will be as today and much more abundant. But I know that the terrific conviction of its truth will hereafter feast upon your lost and despairing souls either in this world or the next when as you utter the agonizing cry of Bartimaeus - Jesus the Son of David have mercy on me. No voice of mercy answers your call - no mercy seat will be seen sprinkled with atoning blood - but the high and awful throne of justice will slam in its place bearing on its pillars the inscription, *the door is shut.*

*[One additional page is attached; this may be the section that was covered by the previous page]*

...that the time of his departure is at hand. And now is there one who has any request to make before he shall go away? Is there no one who has an immortal soul to save? This then is the moment for crying with the blind Bartimaeus, *Jesus the Son of David have mercy on me.* Soon will he be beyond the reach of your voice. *The world all always ye have with you but Christ – ye have not always.*

And must it be Christian brethren that our Divine Master who is now so specially present with this people will soon leave us? Must we be left to go back to the world and to crucify this Redeemer afresh - and must so many of the dear mortal souls in this place be left to perish? O we may rest assured that unless something be speedily done by this church, unless something be speedily done - unless something powerful be done it is vain it is presumptuous to expect the continuance much less the spread of the present revival of religion among us. The truth is and it is a melancholy truth that this church as a church is not yet half awake. And it is a most astonishing and of mercy in God to convert so many souls while we remain in such a stupid condition. Is it not then a proper time brethren for shaking off our slumbers around the table of Christ this afternoon. Let none of us partake of that supper unless we are resolved from this day to commence a new course - O I feel as if it depended upon the [????] of your partaking of this supper at this time whether this revival is to continue or terminate and whether the souls around us now out of Christ shall finally go to heaven or to hell.

Delivered

At Conway November 1821

At Heath November 1822

At Amherst College April 1831

At Amherst College 1838

At Amherst College 1839

At Amherst College 1842

## Sermon 82 Entire Moral Depravity

[Sermon No. 82, "Entire Moral Depravity," Ecclesiastes 9:3, 1821 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 12]

Ecclesiastes 9:3

*The heart of the sons of men is full of evil and madness is in their heart  
while they live and after that they go to the dead.*

Many pious men have used such strong expressions in describing the depravity of the human heart that others have regarded them as extravagant and untrue. Yes here is a description by the wisest man that ever lived and he too under the imprisonment of God which represents man by nature in a state so desperately wicked (it amounts to a kind of madness) that few writers have described him in a worse condition. And had it not been written by Solomon and dictated by God perhaps many of us might be disposed to set it aside as exaggerated and untrue. How sweeping and indiscriminate is the charge he makes upon us! *The heart of the sons of men*, says he that is most definitely the hearts of all men not of a few abandoned ones, *is full of evil*. And if it be full of wickedness where is there room for goodness? But however severe and uncharitable this assertion may seem to the merely amiable and moral man yet Solomon proceeds with an additional remark still more cutting and humbling, *and madness*, says he, *is in their heart while they live*. The original word translated madness is plural and might read thus, *and madnesses are in the hearts while they live*, that is one mad thought or feeling follows another while they live. Solomon here doubtless speaks of the heart of man when it is unchecked in its natural native tendencies: for in the preceding verse he had been speaking of the righteous and the wicked; the clean and the unclean. If then there were no exceptions, if madness was in the heart of all men during all their lives, there could be none clean or righteous. And yet the expression, *the heart of the sons of men*, evidently includes all men. So that there is no way of reconciling the text with the preceding verse, except to suppose that the writer meant to say that the hearts of all men, if left to themselves are full of evil and madness while they live. And although the grace of God renders some comparatively righteous and clean, yet these are exceptions and they are made such contrary to the natural tendency of the heart: and therefore it was not necessary to name these exceptions in stating a fact concerning human nature which until the Spirit of God operates upon it is universally true. A like mode of expression very common in the Old Testament, *the heart is deceptive above all things and desperately wicked*, says Jeremiah - that is evidently - such is the state of the unregenerate heart. *The Lord*, says David, *looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one*. Here the phrase children of men most certainly includes all men under heaven - and yet in the same Psalm there is mention made of the *generation of the righteous*. So that it is evident the Psalmist here speaks of men as they are before conversion - that is while they are under the influence of their corrupt native inclination. And in that sense is it true that God could not find among all men under heaven one that, *did good no not one*.

To say, *that the heart of the sons of men is full of evil and that madness is in their heart while they live* is to deduce essentially the same thing although the latter expression is a stronger and bolder declaration of man's corruption than the former. It implies that the state of the unrenewed heart is such as amounts

to a kind of derangement. Yet we shall endeavor to show that this expression is by no means extravagant or untrue. We shall attempt to prove that madness is in the heart of unregenerate men while they live.

Yet Solomon could not mean by this term that kind of insanity which is usually denominated madness among men. He could not mean that state of mind which led the man whose name was legion in the time of Christ to dwell in the, *mountains and in the tombs crying and and cutting himself with stones*, and which makes it necessary to confine men lest they destroy themselves or others; and which preventeth them from having correct ideas of the most common worldly concerns; and renders them mere nuisances in society. But there is no impropriety in denominating that man mad, or deranged, who uniformly acts contrary to right reason; even if it be in regard to a practical object, say in regard to eternity - although in regard to everything else, he is reasonable and self possessed. Such cases are not infrequent, where men follow the dictates of reason in regard to everything except one. And it was this state of mind no doubt, which Solomon not improperly denominates madness.

And here I am reminded of a passage in the history of a person who was really mad or deranged in the common sense of the term and was confined among other lunatics in an asylum for the insane. This person had some lucid intervals and during one of these he expressed himself to a visitor to this effect. A certain member of us said he are confined in this place because we are deranged. But the fact is the world in general are deranged some in one way and some in another. And now because our madness differs from theirs and we are few in number we are shut up in this place and said to be deranged: while they denominate themselves rational. But were we to become so numerous as to form a majority we should be called the rational party and they the insane.

Now my hearers although there be much that is extravagant in these ideas yet the assertion of this lunatic that there is a degree of madness or derangement adhering to most of us in regard to some particular things is too true. And when an inspired man declares that madness is in the hearts of the sons of men while they live let us not be too hasty in calling this an extravagant expression. Let us not endeavour by any forced interpretation to fritter away the force of the passage. Let us see if we cannot find evidence that there is something in the conduct and feelings of every unregenerate man in regard to his eternal welfare that may well be denominated madness.

And now perhaps my hearers you expect that we are about to bring forward from the bible those texts which exhibit the depravity of the human heart in the strongest light - or that we shall gather from the history of mankind the bloodiest and most savage deeds then recorded. Overpowering evidence might indeed be produced from these sources to the melancholy truth in the text. But we pass term both by at this time and shall confine our remarks to a part which none will dispute viz. - that there are thousands in Christian lands who live in the neglect of religion and who make no preparation for the judgment day. In other words every unregenerate man neglects to submit to the terms of salvation proposed in the Gospel. And now let us see whether this fact does not furnish evidence that all such are under a degree of madness or insanity in regard to eternity. Let us first attempt a parabolical illustration.

A certain man during the night discovers his neighbour's house to be on fire in the lower story and knowing that his neighbor was asleep in an upper room he erected a ladder to the window and ascended to wake him and assist him to make his escape. When he had entered the chamber and broken the slumbers of his neighbor he bid him make haste and escape for his life: for the lower part of his house was all in flames and if he did not flee it might not be a moment a longest it could not be more than an hour before he must sink into the flames below without a possibility of escaping destruction.

This neighbor after hearing him through instead of endeavoring to escape told him about improvement he had contemplated in the furnishings of that chamber and immediately set himself about it stating that when he had finished the chamber he should attend to his warning. He had some more elegant furniture to put up; and some choice paintings which would add very much to the appearance of the chamber and it would not occupy him but a short time. But the man who came to warn him assured his neighbor that his danger was imminent and asked him of what consequence it was how a chamber appeared that was on the point of being burned up and what consolation it would be to him if he should sink in the flames that he had finished it more elegantly and concluded by urging him more earnestly to escape for his life. And while he was yet speaking some one of the family in an adjoining chamber sunk with a with a shriek into the flames. This for a moment aroused the man's attention and he stepped toward the window as if to escape. But on descending the ladder he doubted whether it were able to support him and soon turned about and began again to arrange with much art and taste his pictures. On seeing this the man who came to save him felt so distressed for his danger that he took hold of his hand and endeavoured to pull him towards the window - but he burst away in a rage telling him that he was an intruder meddling with that which did not belong to him and actually compelled him to flee from his presence. In a few moments that chamber was seen to give way and the unhappy man was precipitated into the flames. And wherever the circumstances of this case were known it was the universal conclusion that he must have been deranged or he could not have conducted so strangely and foolishly.

My hearers, mankind were asleep in this world, while the flames of hell were burning beneath and threatening them with inevitable destruction. While in the situation the Lord Jesus Christ came among us, to wake us, show us our danger, and the only way of escape. He has left us the bible which speaks to every unregenerate man and tells him that except he escape for his life - except he repent and have a new heart - it will be at longest but a short time it may not be a single day before he will inevitably sink into the flames of perdition where he will be tormented in a lake of fire and brimstone day and night forever and ever. Yet this solemn warning does not move unregenerate man to flee to the cross for safety: but they go about the concerns of the world with the greatest eagerness and though standing in the most imminent danger every moment they will not set about attaining salvation until they have adorned their persons a little more or acquired a little more knowledge or property or fame or indulged a little more in worldly pleasure. Nay further while these warnings are sounding in their ears from the bible they often are solemnly admonished of the truth by some unregenerate companion on his death bed, who assures him that he is just ready to be plunged into the unquenchable fire because he has neglected his soul. And though such dreadful instances sometimes induce sinners to take a step towards escaping yet they see so many difficulties in the way and have so many doubts about the method of salvation through Christ that they soon give over their fears and return again unconcerned to their pleasures and their literature their money or their merchandise. But Christ does not forsake here. He sends down his Holy Spirit to take them by the hand and as it were compel them to escape to the strong hold of safety. But even this generous assistance they refuse and actually resist that Spirit forcing him as it were to depart. Yes and many unregenerate men conduct in this manner although they profess to believe the bible and the truths it contains. Though they say that they have no hope and believe that should they now die they should sink into perdition and there lie weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth forever and even and though they believe that there is a way of escape through Christ and that it will be their own fault if they are not saved - though many acknowledge all this yet they conduct just as if not one word of it were true and they pursue with eagerness the vanities of this world to the entire neglect of their immortal souls.

Now my hearers who of you is there that would not say that man was insane who conducted as I have described when his house was on fire? And can you hesitate to call him insane who conducts as I have



described while the fires of hell are blazing beneath him he knows not but the next moment may be too late to escape? Or not the two cases parallel? Parallel! did I say? If it be madness to refuse to leave a house on fire and to suffer a temporal death - what shall we call it to refuse to escape from hell and to such blindfold into the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God - to be tormented not merely a few years but forever and ever? If it be insanity to set about adorning our houses when the fire is consuming them what shall we call it to spend our whole time in eager pursuit of the trifles of this life when everlasting fire threatens our souls any moment? And yet that is certainly a faithful account of the conduct of unregenerate men year after year and often as long as they live. Why then does this conduct discover a blind a fatal madness? And why is it that such astonishing infatuation and stupidity is not regarded among men an evidence of insanity as much as the conduct of him who would not escape from his burning habitation? Certainly the fact that men do not thus regard the person that lives unregenerate an additional evidence that in regard to spiritual things madness is in their heart while they live.

Thus much for the first parable. Let us proceed to a second.

A man was observed year after year to be constantly employed in searching every broken and stream for a certain kind of pebbles which had no peculiar value about them except that they were more rare than common pebbles and these he carefully deposited in boxes and placed them in a safe place. During all this time his feet were bare and bleeding being wounded by the stones - his food was of the coarsest kind and not satisfying hunger but a few moments and his drink was of such a quality that increased instead of allaying his thirst. While in this situation a rich man came to him and presented to him as much silver and gold as would render him independant through life and offered to give him food and drink of the best quality to furnish him with a superb dwelling and to place him in a situation where he would be above want and enjoy all this world could afford. And all this did he offer merely because he pitied that hard lot of the poor man. But that poor man although complaining continually of his hardships and trials entirely disregarded this princely offer and although the rich man urged it upon him and tried to reason with him on the subject he proudly and scornfully rejected his invitation engaged more eagerly than ever in collecting his pebbles. And before he died he gathered together an enormous file. And whoever heard of this singular case concluded that once that this man must have been deranged. And so in fact he was.

Yet my hearers the situation of this man gathering pebbles and refusing to accept the gold the palace the food and raiment to liberally offered to him aptly represents men gathering the riches the honors and pleasures of this world and refusing the glories and the joys of heaven. For the riches and pleasures offered this poor man had not a greater superiority above those he then enjoyed. The riches and pleasures of heaven have above those of the earth. They have not a greater superiority did I say? They have not the ten thousandth part as great. For in the case supposed there is ground for a comparison - between earthly riches and heavenly riches there can be no comparison. The one is finite the other infinite. Neither do earthly riches satisfy the mind and the pursuit of the world only serves to increase the thirst for it. Yet God through mere compassion has offered to give us an inheritance incorruptible undefiled and unfading - to give us for food the fruit of the tree of life and for drink the river of the water of life whereof man drinks he shall never thirst - and he has opened the riches of heaven and offered them to us without money and without price and he has urged us most affectionately and earnestly to accept of them without money and without price although they complain of the hardships and trials of this life. Yet unregenerate men refuse and neglect the offer and they go on in pursuit of earthly riches and or honors our pleasures just as eagerly as if no such offer had ever been made. Nay many of them after acknowledging that God has made such an offer to men and after confessing that

this world does not satisfy them and that the riches and joys of heaven are as great as the bible describes after all this they continue year after year to pursue eagerly the objects of time to the total neglect of the riches and joys of eternity. Now if this be not evidence of an insanity in the mind of such persons as that of the poor man whose case we have described where can evidence be found?

And yet to the unregenerate part of the world such neglect of the offered joys and riches of heaven afford no evidence at all of any thing like madness in the human heart. Nay to discover a great anxiety for a new heart for a preparation for heaven is regarded in the world generally as a mark of irrationality and littleness of mind and as indicative of enthusiasm and derangement. I appeal to facts whether this be not the case. O my soul to what a state of debasement and madness has sin reduced the human character!

*My god I feel the mournful scene  
My bowels yearn o'er dying men  
And fain my pity would reclaim  
And snatch the firebrands from the flame. [Source: Hymn by Philip Doddridge, 1739]*

Delivered

At Conway November 1821

At Amherst W. Parish September 1826

At Amherst College February 13 1831

At Amherst North Parish May 1831

At Amherst College February 1835

At February 1838

## Sermon 83 Entire Depravity

[Sermon No. 83, "Entire Depravity," Ecclesiastes 9:3, 1821 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 12]

Ecclesiastes 9:3

*The heart of the sons of men is full of evil and madness  
is in their heart while they live and after that they go to the dead.*

*[Delivered at the afternoon service following Sermon 82.]*

We attempted in the morning to prove that these words of Solomon as applied to men in an unregenerate state are neither extravagant nor untrue. And we did not stop to address proof of the fact that madness is in the heart of the sons of men while they live either from other parts of scripture or from the history of the world. But kept our eyes fixed solely on the single fact that unregenerate men neglect the offers of salvation made to them through Christ year after year and often through life. This fact no one will dispute for it stares us in the face every day and therefore it is a better argument to establish the assertion of Solomon than any more remote and capable of being disputed. That argument - that fact we wish still to keep our eye upon this afternoon. In the former part of the day it was presented before you in a parabolic form. We now drop the parable and present the subject and the argument naked before you. Let us in the first place prepare the way for the subject by giving a short statement of the condition of man by nature in Christian lands - we mean their condition as the bible describes it. For the evidence that the bible is from God is so overwhelming that very few minds can withstand it and probably there is no one within the sound of my voice who will deny its divine original.

With then who are born in a Christian land as soon as we reach the years of moral discernment are informed by scripture and by pious friends that we have but a short and and uncertain time to live in this world - but that we have souls within us that are to live forever and then after death cometh the judgment when we shall be condemned to everlasting woe in hell or received to everlasting happiness in heaven according to the deeds done in the body. We are told further that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God and that by nature we are children of wrath even as others. And that except we repent we shall all perish - except we be born again we cannot see the kingdom of God - and except we believe in the son of God we are condemned already and shall never see light but have the wrath of God abiding on us. That is to say we are all by nature in a state of condemnation having broken the law of God and unless we comply with the terms of deliverance and reconciliation through Christ God will remain our enemy and will cast us into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone forever and ever and punish us with everlasting destruction. And we know not that another hour will be granted to us to comply with these terms.

Such is the alarming state in which the bible informs us as soon as we can read it that we are placed. And now would not an angel of light who was informed of our condition but knew nothing of that madness we carry within us would he not conclude that as soon as we were made acquainted with our fallen alarming condition we should not give ourselves a moments rest until we have made our peace with God and complied with the terms he had propose to us? Would he not conclude that are that our

distress of mine would be exquisite until this was affected lest our lives should be taken away and we sink into everlasting burnings? Would not this angel be thunderstruck were he told that ninety-nine out of a hundred among men receive the knowledge of their awful condition without having excited within them anything more than a momentary anxiety! What would he think that ninety-nine out of a hundred lived year after year in this state of condemnation under the curse of God before they experienced any lasting distress or conviction of their danger although very many among them were taken away in their sins before their eyes and warned them on their death beds of that hell into which they were sinking. Could such an angel believe that when men lay under the eternal curse of an omnipotent God they could possibly attend a single moment even to supply their necessities until that curse were known. Much less could he believe that they could enter actively and with their whole heart into the pursuits of worldly riches or honors or pleasures? And when he saw that they did thus do that they neglected almost wholly the subject of religion and labored constantly for this world's goods as if they were to live and enjoy them forever must he not conclude would he not have reason to say that, *madness is in the heart of the sons of men while they live*? What better evidence could he have that in regard to their eternal state they were actually insane?

Still however men who live along year after year regardless of religion in a Gospel land find it necessary for easing conscience and vindicating themselves before Christians to have some kind of excuse for neglecting it. To some of these let us now attend and perhaps in these also we shall discover evidence of a state of feeling which may very properly be called madness.

And the first excuse that usually meets us for neglecting religion is that repentance and a new heart are the gift of God and therefore we must wait till God please to bestow them. But the easy answer to this is that God does please to bestow these gifts any moment when we seek them in a proper manner - and we challenge any man to produce an instance where a man has sought religion in a proper manner without a right Spirit who did not finally obtain it. You would think that man an idiot who should refuse to sow his seed in the spring saying that as the harvest is the gift of God he must wait till God please to bestow it. Now God has not more truly promised his Spirit to them that asks him: and we have just as much reason to expect a natural harvest without showing that the seed as a spiritual harvest without exertion. But the fact is most men who bring forward this excuse for neglecting religion do not themselves believe that it is any serious obstacle. For if they really suppose themselves compelled to wait month after month and year after year for God to move upon their hearts before they could take one step it would distress them beyond measure lest in the meantime they should die and be cast into hell. And in general those who make this excuse have no such fears - and therefore they do not really believe it. Under all the circumstances then what a degree of madness does it indicate to address such a reason for remaining stupid!

But in the second place many unregenerate men will say that they wish to possess religion but they know not how to set about acquiring it - they know not how to acquire convictions. What a shocking degree of madness and stupidity does it indicate in any heart when it knows that it is every moment exposed to sink into everlasting burnings not to have convictions of its danger! If a man were told that his habitation was on fire and that he would soon be destroyed unless he escaped from it what would you think of him if he should reply I would gladly escape how shall I get convictions of my danger? For although I do not doubt that my house is on fire and that I shall soon become consumed unless I flee from it - yet I am not convicted of my danger and how then shall I set about escaping? Now this language is not more extravagant than for a man to say as many do - I believe the bible to be the word of God and I believe that if I should die in my present state of heart I must go directly into hell. But still I have no convictions of my danger and how shall I get them? And how can I set about working out my

salvation unless I have these convictions? What my hearers! A man believe that in a single hour he may drop into eternal fire - a man stand as it were on the very border of the bottomless pit and have its covering stripped away and already feel the heat he had of a guilty conscience pushing him into it and yet complains that he has no convictions of his danger and gravely enquire how he shall get them? O what a contradiction stupidity and madness! And yet this is the precise condition in which every very many rest in a Christian land! For were they who profess to believe the bible to have convictions of the danger they would soon have convictions for sin and be brought to submission. O there is *madness in the heart of the sons of men while they live!*

A third excuse men have at hand to justify themselves in neglecting religion is that mentioned by Christ. One has bought five yokes of oxen - another a farm - another is busied in merchandise and a fourth has married a wife and they are so constantly occupied by these objects that they cannot find time to attend religion. In other words many men complain that their necessary worldly concerns take up their time so entirely that they cannot attend religion although they wish to become religious. It may indeed be true that a man is so incessantly occupied that he does not find time to attend even for secret prayer. But was he compelled to involve himself in so much worldly business? Would he starve or be without raiment or remain in ignorance were he to devote a portion of time every day to reading the bible meditation and prayer? Certainly nothing short of absolute necessity would afford the least excuse for neglecting the welfare of the soul. And indeed is there any necessity so powerful as to justify a man one hour in neglect of eternity? Suppose an extreme case that a man has the alternative before him either to attend to religion and actually starve to death or neglect religion and live sumptuously a few years and then go to hell? In other words would it be possible to starve on earth and go directly to heaven or to have enough on earth and after death go down to hell? If you ask those who are now in heaven having fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore are those who are now lifting up their eyes and in hell being in torments what think you would be their reply?

But my hearers such a case as this never yet did occur. It is not required of us to neglect our necessary worldly business in order to attend religion. And we do not believe that there was ever yet a man who really supposes that he must leave his worldly concerns to destruction in order to obtain religion. Though there are not wanting those who produce this as a reason for not attending to it. All men in Christian lands regenerate and unregenerate know that the bible enforces repeatedly the virtues of industry and economy and that it condemns only that devotion to these things which excludes attention to the soul - and therefore to address the pressure of worldly pursuits as a reason for neglecting God and eternity as evidence of a kind of infatuation which amounts to madness.

In the next place some unregenerate transgressors will say that although they believe the religion of Jesus Christ is a reality yet they find so many clashing and opposite opinions on the subject among different denominations and different men that they know not what to believe even in regard to the practical part of it. For while one person tells him that a change of heart is necessary and that he hopes he has experienced it, another tells them that this man's proposed change of heart is all a delusion and that he has himself had all those feelings said to accompany regeneration and found them the effect of fear and high animal vanishing in a short time without any fruit. And because men differ on this subject, therefore these persons conclude that they never can arrive at the truth if they attempt it, and hence they do not make the attempt. That is to say, although they acknowledge that there is a human and a heaven and a hell, and that they are not prepared for heaven yet because men differ about what that preparation is, they despair of finding out the truth on the subject and conclude to make no attempt to escape destruction. Now is not this a most irrational counsel? If men had any sense of the value of the torments of hell instead of plunging into an universal doubt on the subject because all do not explain the

bible alike, they would at once not only abandon all confidence in opinions of men but betake themselves to reading the bible with prayer, resting on the plain principle that if God has given us a revelation on which our eternal welfare is suspended he has made it capable of being understood and being also assured in that revelation that, *if any man lacks wisdom he may ask it of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not - and it shall be given him.* And yet we venture to affirm that not one man who makes this excuse for neglecting religion unless he be awakened by the Spirit of God, ever takes this most obvious and consistent course. And why? *Because madness is in the heart of the sons of men while they live.*

Another excuse not infrequently met with for living without religion near akin to the preceding is that many of those who commence a religious life with great ardor and profess to have great light soon fall away and are guilty of greater sin than before and hence it is impossible to say who has religion and who has not. And although few men will openly acknowledge that this is any excuse for their neglect yet the frequency with which many dwell upon this point shows that it does secretly operate to lull their consciences into security. Now to what does this excuse amount? Stripped of its disguise it means just this we are resolved to go to hell because others are and when we are there writing in the agonies of despair how sweet it will be to reflect that a few apostates were the means of bringing us into that place of torment and how much it will alleviate our anguish to reflect that had not these false professors of religion stood in our way we might have gone to heaven! The truth is my hearers were there not a single professor of religion in the world who is really a child of God if every one of them were a hypocrite it would not afford us the shadow of an excuse for neglecting to embrace religion ourselves. For we are bound to look at religion in the bible not at religion as it is abused among men. Yet the majority of unregenerate men find their consciences greatly relaxed whenever they hear a professed Christian has disgraced the cause of Christ. What can such a feeling perceived from unless it be from a heart that is mad?

Another method in which men sometimes excuse themselves at least to their own consciences and especially in times of a revival is this. Religion say they we acknowledge is a good thing and we mean to possess it before we die: but we do not mean to be frightened into it we do not intend to be driven into heaven. We want to take time to examine the subject deliberately: for in a concern of so great importance we do not intend to be mistaken and certainly if religion be not rational it is not worth having. And therefore we dislike to have so much terror preached to us. Now my hearers although such language is in many a mouth and in many a heart the fact is it is impossible either to drive a man into religion or to frighten him into heaven. But he may be driven by the terrors of the Lord to see his danger and frightened at it when he does see it. And then he will make efforts and rational efforts too to escape it. And is there not something in the idea of being gnawed forever by a worm and burned forever in fire and brimstone calculated to produce a most distressing alarm even in the most rational mind. And if all unregenerate men are hourly exposed to these very woes why should we not plainly and repeatedly and forcibly tell them and urge them to escape without a moments delay? If you see a friend in a burning building and perceive the roof just ready to fall upon him would you not cry out to him to escape from it in a moment or he would be a dead man? Or would you say to him it will be well for you my friend to leave that house: but do not be frightened - do not be driven out of it - deliberate well what you are about to do lest you should come out of the wrong door? And yet it would be just as proper it would be more proper to address this man in such a manner than to neglect to warn the impenitent sinner for hell is already opening to receive him and the storm of Almighty wrath and may ere one hour bury him forever. Why is it then that men judge so correctly concerning temporal things and so wildly concerning eternal things? The fact shows that there is within us a strange and deep rooted derangement.

We shall mention but one other fact that afford evidence of Solomon's assertion. It is that unregenerate men who acknowledge the Gospel of Christ to true are yet ashamed of it. They do not indeed alledge this for neglecting as an excuse for neglecting religion nor unless under deep convictions will they acknowledge the fact. Yet it is nevertheless true and probably almost every Christian present can bear witness to it, that unregenerate men when convinced of their danger and of the truth of the gospel are ashamed to let it be known that they are anxious for their souls - and unless their distress be great they will hide it in their bosoms as no doubt very many shift their convictions and resist the Spirit merely because they are ashamed to meet their companions and confess that they are resolved to serve the Lord. They dread being called superstitious or even religious more than the tenors of the bottomless pit. And yet my hearers of what has a man who is anxious for his soul to be ashamed except that he has so long lived without anxiety? Is it anything shameworthy to forsake the company of the wicked man for that of angels of good men of Christ and God? Is it shameworthy to desire to be delivered from the anguish of eternal fire? Ought Or to wish to enter and possess fullness of joy and pleasures forever more in heaven? What communion can be more disgraceful and unpleasant to a pure heart than that of the wicked man which we wish to leave? Or what more honorable and delightful than that we seek? What torments more dreadful than those we would share or delights more exquisite than those we seek to win? And tey after all unregenerate men almost universally are ashamed to acknowledge that they are anxious to possess religion. What! Is a drowning man ashamed to be seen making efforts to save himself? Is an honest man ashamed to exert himself to escape the society of the dishonest? And yet certainly such persons have much more cause to be ashamed than the man who is anxious for his soul. Can there be a stronger evidence of madness in the hearts of men?

Such are the proofs my hearers furnished by the single fact that men neglect religion that the assertion in the text is neither extravagant nor untrue. It is indeed sickening and distressing to observe what a deep and dreadful moral madness this single fact shows us to be in the heart of the sons of men. By this the Prince of darkness keeps his thousands and ten thousands in subjection. This it is that raises so many obstacles to the progress of Christ's kingdom among men and this will cause millions to weep and to rail and to gnash their teeth forever and ever.

Yes my hearers it is a voluntary and an unnecessary madness. It is the deliverance of sin: and therefore discourses deserves and will meet the fiercest punishment from a holy God. Let then the man who indulges this madness the man who neglects religion let him prepare to endure the storm of divine vengeance. For it is gathering over his head. Already do I see the clouds of thickening and blackening in the heavens. The thunderbolts of eternal justice are struggling to give vent to the lightning of almighty wrath already begins to flash. O it is the final storm - and when once it bursts, its lightnings will cleave asunder the earth - its thunder will shake the lowest foundations of hell - its fury will sweep away the broken fragments of the material world and from its caverns will be poured forth a stream of fire to melt the elements and burn up the universe.

That day of wrath that dreadful day  
 When heaven and earth shall pass away  
 What power shall be the sinner's stay?  
 How shall he meet that dreadful day?  
 When shriveling like a parched scroll,  
 The flaming heavens together roll,  
 When louder yet, and yet more dread,  
 Swells the high trump that wakes the dead,  
 O, on that day, that wrathful day,

When man to judgment wakes from clay,  
Where, where shall be the sinner's stay?

*[Adapted from a poem by Thomas of Celano, translated by Sir Walter Scott]*

Delivered

At Conway November 1821

At Amherst W. Parish September 1826

At Amherst College February 1838

At Amherst College 1835

At Amherst College 1838



## Sermon 85 Sinner Like the Heath

[Sermon No. 85, "Sinner like the Heath," Jeremiah 17:5-6, 1821 Dec,  
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Jeremiah 17:5-6

*Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the Lord; For he shall be like the heath in the desert and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness in a salt land and not inhabited.*

*[Trust the bible, not our own interpretation, p. 3. This sermon has many revisions and deletions. It is not clear whether some of the material inserted is alternate or additional text. Some crossed out sections are transcribed, some are omitted.]*

The plan of the discourse we are about to present from these words is first to explain the meaning of the text and then to make a particular application of it. And the first enquiry that meets us is what description of men is it who trust in man and, *make flesh their arms and whose heart departeth from the Lord*? As a general reply to this question we may say that all men who do not love God supremely do not trust in him but in something else that is in worldly object connected with man and they can lean upon an arm of flesh instead of the arm of God. But it may be necessary to be more particular.

In the first place those more specially put their trust in man who rely upon their own reasonings concerning the doctrines and practice of religion rather than upon the bible. We are to use our reason most certainly in examining whether the scriptures have evidence about them that they are a revelation from God. And after we have decided upon the closest enquiry that they are divine we are to use our reason in ascertaining what that revelation contains: but when we find in them some doctrines which appear to us mysterious although clearly asserted by the sacred writers we have no right to reject them because we see difficulties in them. For after we have acknowledged the bible to be the word of God we are bound to believe in everything it contains. We cannot constantly believe a part and reject a part for this is setting up our own reason as a judge of what God can what he cannot reveal. Whereas the very nature of a revelation from God implies that we ought to expect things new in it beyond our faculties to comprehend. Take for instance the doctrine of second said regeneration. After reading in the bible what Christ has declared on this subject that except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, if like Nicodemus we may enquire, *how can these things be?* and are led live on account of the mysteries contained in the doctrine to reject it as untrue or which amounts to the same thing to say that it is a difficult and unintelligible passage and we know not its meaning - this is to put our trust in our own reasonings instead of God's word - whereas if we reject that doctrine we ought to reject the whole bible we ought to believe that doctrine and to distrust our own understanding in a matter so much above our comprehension.

In the second place he trusts in man and departs from the Lord who is more influenced in matters of religion by the opinion and practice of other men than by the declarations of the bible. Some form their religions opinions from the writings of eminent man without consulting the bible to determine whether that contains the same sentiment or not. And very many become so prejudiced beforehand against certain sentiments - entire depravity, regeneration, the trinity, election, etc. - that they would not

discover any thing in the scriptures contrary to their prejudices though plain as the noon day sun. And so certain are they that they must be in the right that they do not pray when reading the scriptures for the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit to guide them into the truth.

There are others and they are numerous too who neglect practical religion because many learned and respectable men - many of their nearest and most valued friends and many of their companions neglected. Like the chief priests and Pharisees of old they enquire concerning Christ, *have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?* It is not in general the unlearned part of society that become converted to evangelical sentiments. And do not the wisest and most learned and most candid of mankind stand in doubt about the reality and necessity of a change of heart? And so long as such men (so long as the majority) neglect vital godliness thousands will lean upon and feel safer to trust in opinions than in God. Yet surely they are confiding in an arm of flesh and departing from the Lord. When God commands them to repent and be converted they do not enquire whether it is their duty but whether such or such persons have presented and been born again: and finding certain favorite individuals or it may be a majority with them they resolve to neglect God and trust in man.

*[A paragraph is crossed out in pencil and is skipped]*

A third class of men who confide in themselves and therefore trust in arm of flesh are those who depend for salvation upon their works. Some conceive nothing more to be necessary to obtain heaven than to be just and upright honorable and merciful in their concerns towards their fellow men and strict in the restraint of their more corrupt passions - that is they depend for salvation upon an exact and elevated morality. Is not this leaning upon a broken staff? Is not this departing from the Lord - who have said that, *by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified and that not of our selves it is the gift of God?*

Other men proceed a step farther. They have a certain round of what are called religious duties in the performance of which they are very strict. They observe exactly the sabbath unite morning and evening in prayer and perhaps (though this is with such is rare) go regularly into their closets and thus far all is well. But they rely only upon these duties for salvation instead of Christ. When they feel any anxiety about their real state they look back and count up their many prayers their many charities their many sacrifices in the cause of Christ and moreover take into view how sincere they have been in all these things and their consciences are at once eased and they conceive it impossible that God should not ever cast away any one who has performed so many good works sincerely. And so he could not were men to be justified and saved by works such by imperfect and selfish obedience - but so long as it is true that *after they have done all they are but unprofitable servants* - so long as they seem *justified freely by grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus* and as long as they are saved *not by works of righteousness which they have done but according to the mercy of God by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost certainly they who rely upon these works instead of the merits of Christ for salvation are trusting in an arm of flesh and not in God.*

Those in the fourth place emphatically trust a man who are depending upon the prayers of Christians. The disciples of Christ ought to pray and will pray for all men and especially for impenitent men, and it indicates a state of feeling by no means unfavorable in a man to ask an interest in the prayers of those whom he believes to be Christians. And it may be that God will hear the prayers of such in their behalf. But He will not hear them until the person who is trusting in them is brought to put his trust somewhere close viz. in the sovereign mercy of God in Jesus Christ. He will be brought first to see that the prayers of his Christian friend derive all their efficacy from the blood of Christ and to realize that to trust in them

and not in God is to lean upon an arm of flesh.

In the fifth place some are trusting in their sincerity. They do not pretend to have studied the bible carefully or to have made up their minds as to the doctrines it contains: or to know anything from their own experience concerning that change of heart which Christ declares essential to salvation. Yet they know that they are sincere in all that they do and feel respecting religion and have no desire to interfere with others in their religious opinions not to prevent their becoming serious: and on this feeling of sincerity they depend for salvation feeling confident that God cannot finally condemn those who are so honest: although God has said, *he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: there is a way etc. - he that believeth not shall etc.*

In the sixth place some are trusting in the means of grace for conversion and thus departing from the Lord. What can we do say they but attend religious meetings and read the bible and pray and consciously perform every moral duty incumbent upon us? We cannot change our own hearts: but we hope to receive the blessings in the diligent use of the means of grace and salvation which God has appointed. Alas such individuals forget that there is not one promise in the bible for the conversion of those who are waiting for it in the use of means: and they forget that experience teaches that no such man ever yet was converted until he was thoroughly convinced that was under immediate and pressing obligation to repent, and love God was led in agony of Spirit to cry to God for mercy. Until they are brought into such a state of feeling they are departing from the Lord and are therefore cursed.

Finally those disciples of Felix who delay attention to a more favorable opportunity depart from the Lord and are under the curse. In time of stupidity they excuse themselves from giving their minds and hearts to religion because there is nothing to excite their attention. In time of a revival they excuse themselves lest they should be influenced by fear or sympathy - or because they cannot in a time of excitement give religion an impartial examination. Such persons are emphatically leaning upon arm of flesh: for they are calculating upon that most uncertain of all things - that response to human life. The command of God is my son give me thy heart - a duty which commends itself at once to every man's conscience nor does it require any learned investigations to proving it binding upon us. But a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked persuades a man that a desire calmly and impartially and thoroughly to examine the subject of religion is the true reason why he does not attend to it - whereas it is nothing but the aversion of that heart to religion that lies in the way.

Today attend is wisdoms voice etc.

There are others in the seventh place who trust in a revival of religion. They conceive that there is an influence abroad at such a time which will almost infallibly force them into the possession of love to God not remembering that though more is said at such a time upon the subject than at others yet the same process must be gone through then as at any other time - viz. submission to the righteousness of God. And accordingly such persons usually find after waiting long during a revival for conversion that they are trusting in man and neglecting God.

We mention but one other class of persons who trust in an arm of flesh. They are the disciples of Felix who depend upon a continuance of life and that they shall at a future time have a more convenient opportunity to become religious. Such were those to whom Isaiah said *cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?* And truly when men look around them and within

them and have evidence from day to day that nothing is uncertain as life is it not a proof of the most egregious folly to rest their everlasting all upon the days to come? This is emphatically to tempt God and to depart from him. Yet thousands in every age - probably some in this house are confiding in this and in this only.

We have now explained what it is to trust a man and make flesh our arms and depart from the Lord. We proceed to explain what is meant in the text by the heath to which such men are compared.

The heath is a certain plant that is found in many parts of the earth on the driest and most barren spots. It does not flourish in the spring like other plants but remains without flowers or leaves till the latter part of summer. It is withered from for want of moisture the soil on which it stands being so loose and dry as not to retain. The showers that fall upon it - and of course it is almost destitute of soil and almost worthless. While other plants in better soils are revived and flourish by the showers and the warmth of summer this stands barren, leafless and withered.

We come now my hearers to the application of this subject - *saith the Lord cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and who departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert and shall not see when good cometh but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness in a salt land and not inhabited.* You have seen that those who put their trust in man are in general terms the impenitent part of society. You have also seen that what is meant by the heath. And now you are able to see how justly the prophet made this comparison. Nothing indeed can be more forcible to describe the condition of the impenitent in a Gospel land. Like the heath they partake not of its influences. Like the heath they remain amid the showers of divine grace withered and dry and in the view of God worthless. They see not when good even the greatest possible good cometh. And though Christians grow and flourish around them and bring forth fruit yet these dwell in a dreary spot and as it were in a land not inhabited.

But we have a more particular application of the subject in view. If the comparison be applicable to unregenerate men in every condition it is most emphatically applicable to such during a revival of religion. Then a most plentiful shower of divine grace is poured out and many souls are repented and put forth the tender leaves and blossoms of holiness and promise ere long to bring forth abundant fruit. But these stand unrefreshed presenting to the eye of God nothing but the naked and barren aspect of moral winter of spiritual death. Though good spiritual good supreme good - eternal good come near them yet they see it not. Though all is dressed in the beauty of spring around them yet there they stand, shrivelled and blasted in the barren soil of sin, in all the stillness and dreariness of winter. There stands the man who leaning to his own understanding neglects the word of God. There stands the man who renders a greater deference to the opinion and practice of others than to the declarations of God. There too you see him whose heart is bound up in the world and him who is stirring to cover himself with the tattered garment of his own righteousness - and him who is looking to the prayers of his fellow sinners for salvation and him who leaps upon the broken prop of his sincerity for salvation and him who sits waiting in moping stupidity for remaining grace in the use of the ordinary means a man who is depending upon that very revival which is only hardening his heart and him too who madly disregards that precious shower of grace now feeling so copiously around him and presumes upon a future day in which to make his peace with God. O what a melancholy group of deluded men who are putting their trust in man and making flesh the arm and departing from the Lord and how mournful to see them standing like the heath in the desert knowing not that good is come - and receiving no refreshing from that stream of grace which waters all around them and puts new life and beauty into many thousands while they remain lifeless blossoms or fruits. O the frost of sin will never be melted except in the eternal

fire. O sin thou put a barren soil and they that are rooted in them will wither and die!

But let us look at this application a little more closely. During a revival of religion separations are witnessed at which the eye of Christian benevolence weeps. The shower of grace which then falls gives new life to one and leaves another on the grave of spiritual death. The parent is often taken while the child is left - the father often witnesses his son and the mother and her daughter rejoicing in hope while they remain desolate as the heath of the desert and though good comes upon their children they see it not and feel it not in their own hard and heavy hearts. The brother perceives unmoved and unaffected the conversion of the sister - and the sister feels none of the influence which regenerates the brother. Brother is separated from brother and sister from sister - the one made ready for death and eternal glory and the other standing forth in the view of God a monument of a hard unsubdued and unfeeling heart. The wife sees her husband singing a new song to his Redeemer she knows not how to sing the Lord's song. The husband hears his wife declaring what God hath done for her so soul while he remains insensible bearing on his forehead the curse upon the barren fig tree. *Let there be no fruits on these hence forward forever.* The friend witness his friend choosing a heavenly friend - the companion forsakes his companion for Christ - and the neighbor witnesses his neighbor beginning to pray while that friend and that companion and that neighbor who are left remain with hearts as hard as ungodly as ever.

And my hearers could we indulge the hope that these separations made during revival would be of short duration - could we believe that those who are left like the heath in the desert would ere long experience a second shower that would renovate their souls the picture not be so distressing. But alas! Small is the probability almost desperate is the hope that those who can resist the motives and the grace exhibited during such a period, should in a season of stupidity submit to God - and should they live to witness a second revival their calls to repentance would be no louder while their hearts would be harder and their sins more rooted. Ah, then these separations will probably continue! Nay! They will become wide and wider forever. Let us follow these different characters in imagination along their respective paths. Speak not here of those who defend themselves with a false hope. But those individuals that parent or child that brother or sister that husband or wife - that friend a companion or neighbor on whom the shower of divine grace has fallen during a revival will find their faith like the morning light that shineth more and more into perfect day. The Spirit of God will continue to nourish and defend by his influences the tender plants of holiness which have sprung up in their hearts during a revival - and ere long they will bear abundant fruit. At length after resisting for a few years the killing blasts of the world they will be transplanted into the garden of God in heaven - there to flourish and blossom and be fruitful forever - being continually nourished by the river of the water of life that proceedeth from the throne of God.

But on the other hand those (that parent or child) that brother or sister that husband or wife that friend or companion or neighbor who during a revival trusted in man and made flesh their arm and departed from the Lord and felt no the shower of divine grace that fell around them - that did not see the good offered but remained like the heath in the desert. These will probably be left in the parched places in the wilderness to inhabit a salt land and not inhabited. Though the showers of the Spirit should fall around them yet they will remain unwatered in the barren soil of sin. Good may come near them but they will not see it. The burning rays of God's displeasure will parch up the little moisture that is left in them. Their hearts will become harder and harder. The drought upon their souls will become more and more intolerable. The desert around them will look more and more desolate when by no flowers nor fruit nor verdant landscape but a dreary sand waste cooled by no breezes and watered by no showers. And at length after a few years they too will be removed into a world where the drought and the desert

will be a thousand times more severe and desolate. And shall we follow them in imagination any farther? Shall we unveil before you the world of weeping and wailing and bid you look at them rooted in the lake of fire and brimstone – forever dying yet condemned forever to live – eternal monuments of the wrath of God – calling in vain for a drop of water to cool their tongues and filling are hell with the agonizing wail. *Now how I hated instruction in my heart and despised reproof! The harvest is past, the summer is ended and I am not saved!* And there O there must they be forever! O it is forever, forever, forever! But we will not draw out the picture. Let the gates of the bottomless pit be closed: for horrible as is the thought there the parent may discover his beloved child or the child his beloved father – the brother may then see a brother or a sister see the sister or brother – the husband a fond wife or the wife a fond husband – the friend a dear friend, the companion a companion – or the neighbor a neighbor – O God spare us the shuddering the agonizing fright – and send thy grace to subdue every heart that we may all at length flourish in immaculate verdure in thy paradise above.

#### Delivered

At Amherst N. Parish May 1831

At Amherst W. Parish May 8 1831

At Amherst W. Parish March 1824

At Conway December 1821

At Ashfield December 1821

At West Haven June 1822

At Heath November 1822

At New Bedford June 1823

At West Springfield October 1823

At South Hadley Canal August 3 1828

At Amherst College April 1831

At Amherst College April 1835

At Amherst College April 1839

## Sermon 86 Stewardship of Ministers Teachers and Parents

[Sermon No. 86, "Stewardship of Ministers, Teachers and Parents," I Corinthians 4:2, 1821 Dec, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 13]

I Corinthians 4:2

*It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.*

In great families an officer is appointed to have the oversight and the management of them who is called a steward. For the manner in which he conducts the temporal concerns of the household he is accountable to the master. The conditions of man in relation to God is precisely that of a steward to his master and this comparison is a favorite one with sacred writers as you will recollect. Everything indeed which we possess is only lent to us for a season – and for the manner we use every talent and every possession we must give an account to God - the Supreme Master of the universe. In the day of judgment he will say to us as the master in the parable said to the officer who had charge of his household, *give an account of thy stewardship*. And there is no principle more evident in regard to stewards whether appointed by God or man than that, *a man be found faithful*. Whether we have been faithful to our own souls and the souls of others will be the grand enquiry of our final judge.

We have chosen this text my hearers not at this time to make a general application of the principle contained in it to all the relations between God and man: for this would be too wide a range. We have three cases in view in which men are eminently stewards of God and to these we mean in this discourse to confine our attention. The minister of Christ is peculiarly a steward in spiritual things over his people. The instructor of youth is peculiarly a steward over his scholars. And the parent is peculiarly a steward over his children and household. And we mean to enquire when these stewards of God are faithful in their respective stations.

The first of these stewardships that of minister over his people is the one of which Paul is speaking in the context - *Let a man do account of us says he as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God*. By the mysteries of God he means those sublime truths of the Gospel which had in ages past been kept hid from men but now revealed by the Holy Ghost. And these doctrines were entrusted to the ministers of Christ to be imparted to their people just as the master of a house entrusts his property in the hands of steward to give his household their meat in due season.

A minister of Christ then is not a faithful steward of the mysteries of God unless he declare to his people the whole counsel of God. This was the reflection that made Paul triumphantly exclaim to the Ephesians, *I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*. Whatever doctrine the minister sincerely believes to be in the Gospel of Christ he must plainly and boldly and practically urge upon his people. Perhaps many in his congregation perhaps the majority - perhaps many of his nearest friends are decided and even violent in their disbelief of such or such a doctrine but if he sincerely believe it to be a part of God's revelation this consideration must not deter him one moment from declaring it and proving it and enforcing it. It may be and undoubtedly is in all cases painful to the preacher of righteousness to cross the feelings or opinions of any of his people: but it is the truth only that can make them free and if he keep back any of

the truth because his hearers do not relish it how can he hope for or dare to pray for the blessings of God upon his labours? A bold and inspiring declaration of the truth may be indeed and often has been the means of driving the faithful servant of Christ from his station. Often has it brought reproach upon his character involved him in poverty and subjected him to a life of persecution and wretchedness. But for all this he who engages in this work should be prepared and though all these evils threaten him and though it would be perfectly easy for him by prophesying smooth things to avoid them all yet he should not shrink for a moment from as plain and forcible declaration of the doctrines of the cross as it is in his power to make. *For he ought to obey God rather than men.* He ought to employ the utmost of his faculties in explaining defending and applying divine truth. He cannot be too plain nor too forcible. He cannot be more plain or forcible than the bible. We do not mean indeed that he should be personal in his remarks. He should not appear in the pulpit as if he were contending with an adversary. He should indeed endeavor to forget that there are any in his congregation to deny the truth he defends. It is said that a sentinel when on duty in an army should know no man. So the minister of Christ when in the pulpit should forget everything in regard to his hearers except that they are dying sinful men like himself and he should, *know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified.* He should fill his quiver with arrows from the word of God and then hurl them forth with energy indeed not pointing them at this or that man - leaving it with God to direct them to the conscience of individuals. Justice is described by the poet as being blind. So the Ministry of Christ when in the pulpit dealing out the mysteries of God that is the doctrines of the cross should be blind to the opinions and feelings of friends and foes. He should wield the two edged sword of the Spirit which is the word of God with a double handed sweep not knowing whether friends or foes are smitten. He must tell backslidden Christians generally - not this or that backslider that except they remember from whence they are fallen and repent and do the first works a double condemnation awaits them. He must tell the impenitent not this or that unregenerate man but impenitent men generally that they are a lost that they are dead in trespasses and sins - that madness is in their hearts while they live - that they are children of wrath even as others - that a deep and a mortal leprosy is upon their souls and that in the language of the Psalmist, *God is angry with them every day and if they turn not he will whet his sword that he has bent his bow and made it ready and he hath prepared for them the instrument of death.* Such plainness and impartiality is alone consistent with faithfulness in the steward of the mysteries of God. Such plainness and impartiality cannot fail of taking effect upon some of his hearers - whether that effect be to bring them to yield to Christ or to arouse them to opposition he must leave with God to determine assured that he has done his duty and that he is, *pure from the blood of all men because he has not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God.*

And O my hearers if the minister of Christ feel any thing of the value of a more immortal soul - if he feel any thing of the solemnity of eternity above all if he keep his eye fixed upon the judgment seat to which he and the people of his charge are hastening how can he avoid being thus plain and thus faithful! It is an awful an overwhelming thought that he must meet every individual in his parish and be enquired of in the presence of the universe whether he has been faithful in divining to them the word of life. If he has kept back any thing essential to their salvation if he has by neglect been the means of the everlasting ruin of one wretched soul better would it be for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck and he be cast into the sea. More tolerable will it be for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for him! O my hearers I must meet you that day and be confronted with you. And what great reason have I to fear that the blood of some of you will be brought upon my head because I am so unfaithful to you souls because I am so prone through fear of giving offense or wounding your feelings to neglect to declare so plainly and forcibly as I might the great the searching the saving doctrines of the cross. Brethren I do shudder at the thought of that final meeting. Brethren I shrink from that final meeting. O it is awful it is freezing to my soul to think of meeting one of you there whom I have been the



means of conducting to perdition. How can I then look that man in the face and remember that if I had been faithful to him his soul would have been saved and my own. But now we must go away together into hell and there will his agonized countenances his groans of despair and his bitter reproaches be like so many daggers into my heart and harrow up my guilty soul forever and ever. Lord save me from so awful a fate!

We remark in the second place that the instructor of youth is a steward over his scholars. And we proceed to enquire when he is found faithful. That he is a steward in regard to their instruction in human literature and science cannot be doubted and if he is unfaithful in this respect parents and guardians will soon discover it and feel very solicitous about it. But alas few are equally anxious whether he be as faithful to their souls – nay many are indifferent even if he exert an influence upon them unfavorable to religion. For in truth an indifference of some sort or other he must exert upon them in regard to religion and if not for Christ it must be against him.

This situation indeed is peculiarly favorable for fixing on their tender minds a sense of the importance of religion or of closing their hearts against the influence of eternity. And that parent must be in a state of awful insensibility who can be indifferent whether his children secure their instructors religious exhortation.

But what must the instructor do in order to be fruitful? One most obvious course is morning and evening to call his scholars to unite with him in prayer to God for forgiveness of sin and continued blessings. This will have a most salutary influence not only upon his own mind by solemnizing it and composing it but will also inspire in their bosoms at very least a reverence for God and if offered in faith those prayers will be answered and the influence of the Spirit be given.

But in the business so full of difficulties and so responsible as that of youthful instruction a man who feels these things cannot rest satisfied with a formal prayer morning and evening. He will daily go into his closet and then commit his way to the Lord imploring a blessing upon the souls committed to his instructions. How will he dare to engage in so arduous a work – a work where every thought every word every action may be the means of fixing the eternal state of immortal souls - how can he dare engage in this without earnestly and constantly imploring the guidance of the Holy Spirit? O if he love their souls as he ought as a faithful steward how earnest will he be that he may be the means of their salvation and how will he long to see them enquiring not merely how they shall be learned but what they shall do to be saved?

Another very important thing without which an instructor of youth cannot be found faithful is moral and religious exhortation. If he pray in secret for his scholars he cannot avoid this. The very idea of his praying sincerely for them implies an anxiety for their moral and religious improvement - and if he do not address them on all suitable occasions and let them see that he longs for their eternal happiness - that is if he do not take this most effectual of all means to render them virtuous and religious will he not feel ashamed to implore God to convert them? The fact is a neglect of secret prayer will cause him to neglect exhortation and a neglect of exhortation will cause him soon to neglect secret prayer.

And the exhortations a faithful instructor will give his children will be such as will make them feel that he believes and realizes what he says and that he does earnestly long for their eternal happiness. He may be faithful in causing them to learn many of those summaries of religious doctrine and duty called catechism: but these children are apt to learn without knowing their meaning and they repeat them as a matter of habit without once supposing that they have anything more to do by way of application of

those things to themselves. Yet when their instructor from the fullness of his heart shows to them how pleasant are wisdom's ways and that all her paths are paths of peace - when he tells them they are immortal - that they must soon die - and that there is a heaven for the virtuous and a hell for the vicious - they can hardly resist such exhortations which are sanctified and applied by earnest prayer. Not that an instructor should inculcate upon his pulpits upon his pupils sectarian peculiarities but let him set before them the great - the fundamental - the practical truths of the Gospel. Let him tell them of the wonderful love of Christ in dying to save sinners and that except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven - truths which must be fundamental and practical so long as the bible is acknowledged as the word of God. Let him inculcate the strictest morality of conduct and urge them to the universal duty of daily secret prayer. Thus doing he will be found faithful and though his pupils neglect his instruction and finally perish yet will he be clear from their blood and their blood will be upon their heads. But stopping short of this obvious course of duty how can he meet these children at the bar of God? Few instructors are there who are not anxious to please their employers and so they ought to be. But let them never forget that they are stewards of God and let them be at least as anxious to please him whose eye is continually upon them and who notes down in the book of his remembrance the manner in which they execute the important and religious office with which he has entrusted them. They must one day have a review of all they are now doing and though they may be now unfaithful to the precious souls committed to their care yet God will be faithful in requiring of them an account of their stewardship.

The third class of men we propose to address as the stewards of God ours are parents and heads of families. And no one of this extensive class will deny that God has constituted them stewards to supply the temporal wants of their children and families. And very few are there who are so unnatural a part as not to do their utmost to supply their children with food and raiment if it be in their power. Indeed there is scarcely a man living who will not assent to that declaration of the Apostle that, *he who provideth not for his own household hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel*. The husband and the father cannot see his wife or his children crying for bread or shivering with the cold without exerting the utmost energies of his nature to supply them. But the truth is the parent is just as much bound to exert himself to supply the spiritual wants to the children as he is the temporal wants. And that man is merciful who suffers a child to perish through hunger or nakedness in comparison with him who leaves their souls to perish eternally without any exertion to save them. To refuse to open your door to a child perishing in a wintry storm and pleading for admittance would be thought an act of the most shocking cruelty and the man who should do it would be abhorred and shunned by society. But refuse to make any effort to open for child the door of heaven nay to throw bars in the way of becoming religious this is infinitely more cruel - yet thousands of parents are guilty of it and it excites no unpleasant feelings and no remarks among men.

But what is it that makes a parent a faithful steward in Spiritual things over his children? In the first place he cannot be faithful who is not much engaged in prayer with them and for them. In a prayer which Jeremiah says was dictated by the Holy Spirit he implores God to pour out, *his fury upon the families that call not on his name*. David prayed morning and evening and Daniel did the same morning noon and evening. Reason accords with this practice of the ancient patriarchs morning and evening to collect our families together and commend them to the keeping of Almighty God. How deep how abiding is the effect of such a method upon parents and children. Is he then a faithful steward who neglects it? Has he not reason to fear that the prayer of Jeremiah will be answered? Has he any reason to expect that his children will be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Will they not be very prone to follow the prayerless example set them?

But the parent who is a faithful steward does not rest satisfied with what is termed family prayers. The father and the mother who feel as they ought the awful responsibility that rests upon them to bring up their children to God will often kneel together during the silence of midnight to implore a blessing upon their children and their domestics. In the book of Ecclesiastes in the Apocrypha it is said that, *the father maketh for the daughter when no man knoweth and the care for her taketh away sleep*. No doubt every faithful parent before me know this from his own experience and I can scarcely believe there are any in this house who, having such a solemn charge committed to them, can live month after month and year after year without sending up their devout and fervent and united prayers to heaven for direction and for the salvation of their dear children. Much less would I believe that there is one who has not often who has not daily prayed in secret for the precious immortal souls committed to his superintendence. Can anyone be so insensible to his obligations. So cruel to his tender offspring as not to beseech an Almighty God to protect them from the temptations of the world – and so regardless of their eternal welfare as not earnestly to pray that they may be saved if he himself should perish!

And here I cannot refrain from stating a fact with which I have been made lately acquainted which although it may excite the smile of the of the sceptre will I doubt not delight the heart of the Christian. A father of a family died leaving a widow to support and bring up eleven children. She felt the immense responsibility that rested upon her and resolved to devote every moment she could spare to secret prayer for the conversion of those children all of whom were unregenerate. This sets not a morning and evening service: but it was continued at all times possible through the day and even when altering to other concerns - week after week and month after month - till at length one child diverted himself to God then another then another and so on until before she died the whole eleven were rejoicing in the hope of a blessed immortality. O what faith! What faithfulness and what success!

Another method without which the parent cannot be a faithful steward over his children is to give them personal instruction and exhortation. Said God to the Israelites, *And these words* (that is the ten commandments) *which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart - And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walketh by the way and then thou liest down when thou risest up*. And is this covenant less binding upon us than upon the Israelites? Shall those who have the Gospel in addition to the law be under less obligation to instruct their children? Shall they not do it more earnestly and more feelingly? If the children be uninstructed by their parents who is there to direct them in the ways they ought to walk in? Who else feels in them so much interest – or will have so much influence over them? Who else is so responsible for their conduct? Who else will have such an account to render for them at the day of judgment.

And here we would remark that there is a certain method of enforcing religious instruction adopted successfully by some. After personally and individually addressing their children and domestics they kneel down and pray with them and for them or if they address an individual child they pray separately with him. Those who have never tried this course are not aware of the deep impression it makes. It convinces the child that the parent is sincere and in earnest.

My hearers I have not addressed you all this afternoon - but if God blesses this feeble discourse its effect may reach you all. Or if you feel nothing in this world from it yet you will remember it at the day of judgment. For there shall we meet you all either as minister and people are his instructors and pupils or as parents and children. And O ye instructors and ye fathers and mothers what a meeting will that be for you and me. There perhaps we shall find some miserable soul who our unfaithfulness has cheated of everlasting happiness. O how can I endure to meet one of this people fixing on me the looks of despair and calling me the author of his eternal ruin. How can you O instructor of youth bear to hear the

reproaches of one of your scholars whom your unfaithfulness has destroyed. And thou O parent how can you sustain the shock when one of your dear children cries out before the universe O my parents my parents thy unfaithfulness has destroyed me eternally.

Delivered

At Conway December 1821

## Sermon 87 Neglect of Precious Opportunities

[Sermon No. 87, "Neglect of Precious Opportunities," I Kings 20:40, 1822 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 13]

I Kings 20:40

*And as thy servant was busy here and there he was gone.*

*[Discussion of New Year; 21 church members have died. See reference to present revival of religion in the church, p. 15.]*

The rapid and unceasing march of time has brought us my hearers to enter upon a new year. Another large and important portion of our lives is closed and with all its changes and trials with all its omissions and sins of commission and with all its deeds of benevolence and holiness it is sealed up unto the judgment. There is a faithful record on high of every unholy thought feeling and action in which we have indulged the past year and by the side of the catalog of our sins is put down a list of our prayers our holy desires our religious meditations and pious actions - and there must this record stand till the Lord Jesus shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And that record cannot in one iota be altered - for there is written upon it, *that which is let it be holy and that which is filthy let it be filthy still.*

Such an important season as this ought not then to pass by without pausing and looking into our hearts and back upon our lives and forward upon the days to come. We have been at a loss to decide what direction to give your meditations this day. But have at least selected for the theme of discourse a part of an ancient parable proceeding from the mouth of an unknown prophet and directed to the wicked Ahab. He had conquered the Syrian blasphemer Benhadad and had concluded a treaty with him contrary to the express command of God, instead of destroying him as the law required. God therefore sent him a prophet who by a parable caused him to pass judgment upon himself as did David in the case of his adultery. The whole of the parable addressed to Ahab is thus: *So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way and disguised himself with ashes upon his face. And as the king passed by he cried unto the king and he said thy servants went out into the midst of the battle and behold a man turned aside and brought a man unto me and said keep this man: if by any means he be missing then shall thy life be for his life or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. And as thy servant was busy here and there he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him so shall thy judgment be, thyself hast decided it. And he hasted and took the ashes away from his face and the king of Israel discerned him that he was one of the prophets. And he (the prophet) said unto him thus saith the Lord, because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction therefore thy life shall go for his life and thy people for his people.*

This statement of the prophet was doubtless a parable and not a real history of his conduct. And therefore it is not improper to extend its application beyond the original design which was to condemn Ahab. If applied to the misimprovement we all make of that previous time given to us to prepare for eternity it will condemn us all. And this is the use we intend to make of the text.

We begin with the Christian - with him who hopes he has been born again and that at death he shall

pass into heaven. Such an one when he lays his head upon his pillow at night after a day spent almost without prayer and devoted to the world feels some reproofs of conscience and resolves that if God spare his life to see another day he will live more to his glory. God does spare his life: but the the concerns of the world press equally hard upon him and while he is busy here and there the day is gone and God is robbed of the service he requires.

The Christian too often realizes at the close of the week that he has not spent it as a child of God and he determines to do more for God should he live through another seven days. But so busy is he here and there that he finds no more place in his heart for God and no more time for religion.

The close of a year is another period which no man who is a Christian can pass by without solemn reflection upon his conduct a deep sense of his failures in duty and neglect of communion with his God - and most of us at such a period feel within us strong resolutions of beginning the new year and living through it more devoted to the cause of Christ. Yet with the greater part of us the farm the money and the merchandise or the honors and pleasures of the world so absorb our thoughts that our resolutions prove mere empty words and scarcely do we think of them again until we find that this year is gone. Professed Christians are sometimes also led to see that the general tenor of their lives does not comport with the Gospel and they feel as if it were high time for them to awake out of sleep. But they are not yet quite prepared for entering upon the work. They have such or such a piece of business to perform which they conclude duty will not permit them to neglect and then they shall be ready to engage with greater ardor in the course of Christ. But when the set period of reformation comes they have either forgotten their resolutions or feel indifferent about it or find other concerns pressing upon them and they do a little more than renew their resolutions removing farther forward the time of their performance and thus most professors pass on resolving and resolving until after having been busy here and there in worldly pursuits for a time they find unexpectedly that life is gone and that they are summoned to give an account of their stewardship. Whether those of us who live so far from what we ought will be accepted in that day the record of eternity can alone determine. Yet enough is revealed to cause us to tremble if we are more anxious for and more devoted to this world than the next.

We now proceed to apply the text to the impenitent and unrenewed part of society. With the greater part of such it is also true that while they are busy here and there in the concerns of the world their day of grace is gone forever. Yet most of this description have an impression that they shall attain religion before they die. And when they find that they have loved the world and neglected God till he has shown in his wrath that they shall never enter into his rest they feel the most tormenting agonies doubling the pangs of death and giving them a foretaste of what it is to feel the undying worm and the unquenchable fire.

*The friendship of the world, says an apostle decidedly, is enmity with God. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.* Now the proof that unregenerate men do universally love the world is that they derive more pleasure from the pursuit of it than from the pursuit of religion. They engage in acquiring the riches honors and pleasures of the world much more eagerly and ardently than in seeking religion. They derive more pleasure from the conversation of worldly men than religious men. Time appear short to them when engaged after the world: but it appears long and tedious when employed in worshipping God. And it is because they love the world that impenitent men become so busy in its concerns that they have no time for God. For a man will find time to attend to that on which his heart is placed. Yet one man who is in full chase after honors flatters himself with the idea that when he has reached such a point of distinction before him he shall then pause and attempt religion. But alas so busy is he here and there that life is gone before he has any time or desire to take hold seriously of the work

of experimental religion. Another man whose heart is set on riches feels confident that when he has effected such and such an enterprise then he shall have leisure to enter without distraction upon the acquisition of religion. He does not realize that his present neglect of religion proceeds not from the want of time to attend to it from a want of love to it - from a supreme love to the world. A third man who is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God apprehends that when he has reached such or such a point of enjoyment his appetites will be closed and he shall have nothing to do but to enter upon a religious course. And it is indeed true that his worldly pleasures will soon lose their relish. But the difficulty will be no love for religion to succeed his gluttoned appetite and he will find that he has been busy here and there so long in pursuit of worldly point pleasures that his day of grace is gone.

Though many impenitent men may deny it it is nevertheless true that most persons of that description when they have the subject of religion pressed upon them do feel a thousand difficulties in the way of attending to it now - and they continue Felix like to flatter themselves with the hope of a more convenient season. But experience shows universally that the longer they neglect it the more busy they are and here and there and the greater part of them find before they are aware of it that life is gone and that their souls are gone.

We have applied the text to Christians and impenitent men and shown how it describes their misimprovement and neglect of the day of life God has given them for a day of grace. But there is a peculiar season with which some are favoured when this text is more specially applicable. I refer to a revival of religion. And although my hearers you may be disgusted by hearing this subject so often brought forward yet while I do most firmly believe that God's Spirit is striving with you in a special manner I must not I cannot I dare not refrain from calling upon Christians to awake and be active and to warn every irreligious man what a precious moment it is for him to obtain religion and in what a fearful state he will be in should the work cease and he be left impenitent.

I do feel brethren that I cannot urge these solemn exhortations upon you too often or too forcibly and plainly: for this is a most solemn day with the believers and unbelievers - and I have great reason to fear that neither of these classes realize how peculiar how responsible how awfully momentous is this condition. The truth is that every week nay almost every day probably decides the eternal destiny of someone of our neighbors or friends.

During a revival then the text is applicable to Christians. As the prophet had a man committed to his keeping on the day of battle for whom he was to be answerable even with his life so Christians are appointed by God to be the means of the conversion of their brethren and if they are unfaithful the blood of these souls will finally be required of them. Most professors of religion when the Spirit of God is specially poured out upon any place are led to form many resolutions. They determine generally to awake from their spiritual slumber: but are not quite ready. They resolve when they are awakened to have more close conversation with such an impenitent friend or neighbor or child and to be more fervent in their prayers and to exert themselves in every way more energetically. But while they are busy finishing such or such an enterprise and ere they get ready to enter upon the works perhaps that unregenerate friend or neighbor or child is gone out of the world - perhaps the Spirit is gone from him and his heart is proof against all admonitions. And why should not every Christian expect that when Christ his Divine Mentor has come so near him and he will not even forsake for a short time the trivial concerns of life to welcome him that to welcome him and improve his special visit why should he not expect that if he neglects Christ's time Christ will neglect his time?

We know indeed that during a revival a cry is not infrequently raised against those professors of religion

who engage actively in the work because they are neglecting the worldly business. But if they really believe that they may be instrumental of saving their brethren – if they really believe that the Spirit of God will soon be gone and those friends be left to reprobate minds how can they if they do indeed feel the value of salvation how can they hesitate whether it is their duty to be active even if for a short season their worldly concerns should suffer! How can they hesitate when they feel assured that, *the Lord will provide*. And how can any man be unwilling to engage in some extra services in the cause of religion at such a time when perhaps the destiny of immortal souls is dependent on his efforts. How low must he estimate the value of a soul who is willing to have it run the risque of its damnation rather than spend a few extra hours or days for its salvation!

But if the text applies to Christians peculiarly during a revival much more pertinent and striking is its application to the unregenerate. As before observe most men of this character do not intend to die without religion. They expect a more favourable time will ere long arrive. No season can indeed be more favourable than the present of moment because the longer a man lives the harder is his heart. But those who witness a revival of religion do see to say the least a very favourable time for embracing a Saviour. And if they do not repent and be converted then the probability is certainly small that they will ever be. Whether we reason from the nature of the case or from the general course of God's providence this alarming conclusion focuses itself upon us that those who live unmoved through a powerful revival will probably never be converted. And the majority of impenitent men acknowledge this probability. They regard it as a rational conclusion that they are now receiving their last special call to prepare for eternity. Yet they do not feel quite ready to attend to it with all their hearts. Could they be excused a few days or a few weeks till they have finished such or such an enterprise they flatter themselves that they shall enter with ardor upon working out their salvation with fear and trembling. But alas while they are busy here and there the precious instrument of acceptance with God is gone - the Spirit is gone and they *find no place for repentance though they seek it earnestly with tears*.

And O my hearers I feel it my imperious duty as a watchman for your souls to lift up my voice this day and sound an alarm in this congregation lest this be the miserable case of some of you. Nay I have every reason to believe that some of you and great reason to fear that many of you will suffer the present revival of religion among us to pass away without becoming the subject of it. I fear that the love of this world will prove the ruin of your souls. Though you may calculate upon obtaining religion while the Spirit of God is striving with this people yet I tremble for you lest you should be so occupied in the affairs of this life that you will not arise to commence the work of your salvation till this precious season is passed. I feel greatly that when you enquired of at a future date whether you were a subject of this revival you will be compelled to say *while thy servant was busy here and there he was gone*.

But my dear hearers for whose salvation I feel an earnest desire will you can you suffer such a precious season as this to pass away and improved?

Can you so easily cheated of heaven and contented to go down to hell? Now Christians are earnest in prayer for you the conversion of many around you powerfully calls up your attention to the subject and we verily believe that God's Spirit is knocking at the door of your hearts. But soon will those prayers become languid - soon will you cease to remember the conversion of your neighbors and soon will that Spirit grieved by your stupidity be gone beyond return.

What then does the voice of wisdom dictate? The voice of wisdom is the voice of scripture and it says, *escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed*. Does anyone feel disposed to look back upon the world after beginning to seek



religion with longing regrets as and let such an one remember Lot's wife and take warning lest he be made like her an eternal monument of God's wrath. It is these lingering glances and desires towards the world - it is this unwillingness to give up all for Christ that has proved the ruin of thousands.

Again we ask what does wisdom dictate? And there is a voice coming from the grave of the past year on which we now stand crying to every unregenerate man, *Now is the accepted time behold now is the day of salvation*. While such have been busy here and there that year is gone and Oh, what a dreadful catalogue of neglected and abused opportunities has it carried to the bar of God! What madness to add any more to this dreadful list!

Again we ask the unregenerate man what does wisdom dictate? And a voice comes from the graves of twenty one of our neighbors and friends whom during the past year we have followed to the tomb saying unto us, *prepare to meet thy God*. Yes the united voices of twenty one come from the graveyards around us and were we not like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear would thrill through our souls till we had prepared to meet our God. And my hearers which twenty one of us perhaps I might properly ask which 30 or 40 or 50 are to follow in the same course the year we have entered. We know not who are the individual victims: but certainly they are some of us - and death that king of terrors knows who they are and he is now pointing his arrows at those whom he has permitted to make his prey. Can any man resist such an argument? Will you not all my hearers attend to making your peace with God ere another year shall be gone? Another year! Who has promised you so long period as that? Who has promised you shall live another month? Who has promised you another week? Who has promised you another day? Who has promised you another hour? Who has promised you another moment?

Delivered

At Conway January 1822

## Sermon 88 Moral Value of the Services of the Wicked

[Sermon No. 88, "Moral Value of the Services of the Wicked," Proverbs 15:8, 1822 Jan, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 6: folder 13]

Proverbs 15:8

*The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.*

This text leads me naturally to consider a subject concerning which there is much caviling and with which many are perplexed. I refer to the Christian so often asked in what light God regards the best actions and thoughts and feelings of unregenerate men? To give a scriptural answer to this enquiry is the object of this discourse. And it will be necessary in the first place to collect together the various passages of scripture that relate to this subject.

As just observed this is a subject concerning which men are disposed very much to cavil and dispute - and many are even irritable about it and can hardly bear to discuss it candidly. It is presumed however that there are none present at this time who will not be willing to assent to whatever is clearly revealed in the scripture - however opposed it may be to their opinions and feelings. If any will not take this course they ought in order to be consistent to reject the whole bible. And to such it will be useless to address any argument drawn from the bible. But to those who are willing to abide by the decisions of that sacred book we say in the first place that God hath declared therein that all the religious services of the wicked are an abomination of him. This is undoubtedly the meaning of the text. *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord.* The many sacrifices under the spiritual dispensation were all symbolic of internal and spiritual duties: and the word is frequently in scripture applied directly to these. The Psalmist speaks of the sacrifices of thanksgiving. He also says, *the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* And that the word is used to comprehend every religious performance is evident from the remainder of the verse - *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his obligation.* Here the latter part of the verse is set in contrast with the former: but it would not be in contrast unless the former included the latter. And if it be allowed that the term sacrifice includes prayer no one will doubt but it includes every religious duty the unregenerate attempts to perform.

It may however be objected that by the sacrifice of the wicked in this passage is not meant the sacrifice of all unregenerate man but merely of such as are not sincere in their religious duties and who perform them for the sake of effecting some base or selfish end. But it happens that Solomon himself has answered this objection. In the 21st chapter of Proverbs he says, *The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination; how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?* Here a distinction is made between the wicked generally and those who bring their sacrifice of any kind to serve some base end, to cover some hypocritical design and although such a hypocrite is doubly abominable in the sight of God yet the sacrifice of the wicked in any case Solomon declares to be abominable.

We have but one more passages to produce on this point. Says Solomon, *he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law even his some prayer shall be an abomination.* That is he who refuses to listen to or obey the commands of God - his prayer is an abomination. And where is the impenitent sinner who

does not neglect and reject God's first command to love Him supremely? And if the prayer of such be an abomination how can any other of his religious services be any better?

In the second place the bible separates all the actions of the ordinary employments of the unregenerate to be sin and an abomination to God.

*The way of the wicked, says Solomon, is an abomination to the Lord.* By the way of the wicked is doubtless meant the general course of his life – and as the inspired writer has made no exceptions and must be inferred that all the actions of the unregenerate are an abomination to God.

If it be objected that by the wicked in this passage is not meant all unregenerate man but only the most abandoned, we answer Solomon in the remainder of the verse has settled this difficulty. He says, *The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.* That is evidently he loves him that earnestly desires and endeavors to be righteous - although he does not attain to perfect righteousness. So that if a man have at even the least degree of righteousness or holiness God loves him: but the course of life of all others however amicable and upright their worldly conduct is an abomination to him. And we know that it is the character of all unregenerate men that they have no righteousness or holiness.

There is another passage of the scripture we might address on the subject: *The ploughing of the wicked, says Solomon, is sin.* The word here rendered ploughing might be translated lamp or light and then the passage would read, *an high look and a proud heart of the lamp of the wicked is sin.* Now a lamp or light represents the rule of the wicked man's actions and if the rule that guide such be sin what must their actions be. So that the verse translated either way shows that in the view of God all the actions of the wicked are sin.

In the in the third place the Scripture declares that the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. You recollect perhaps that Solomon in the 15th chapter of Proverbs uses this very expression. *The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.* Further proof of the position is unnecessary.

There is however in scripture one general proof of all the propositions above laid down that all the religious services all the actions and ordinary employments and all the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination. It is presumed no one present will deny that no man loves God until he is regenerated and therefore unregenerate men do not do anything for the glory of God. Now the command of inspiration is *whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever you do do all to the glory of God.* This command evidently extends to every action and every word and every desire and to every thought and is binding on every man. But we have just seen that unregenerate men do not think nor desire nor speak nor act in any case to the glory of God. What is this neglect but sin: for sin consists not merely in transgressing the law of God: but in any want of conformity to it.

Such is the view my hearers the scripture gives us of the light in which God regards the thoughts actions and desires of the wicked or impenitent. In stating it I have endeavoured to adhere closely to the sense of the bible without straining a single passage. I am not sensible of any disposition to warp a single passage to favor any peculiar sentiments. I have endeavoured to adhere closely to the declarations of the unerring word of God - and there I find it assented that the sacrifice or religious services generally of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord that the way or course of life of the wicked is an abomination - that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination - that the ploughing of the wicked is sin and that the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. And now my hearers I will proceed to state the

reason why the actions feelings and thoughts of unregenerate men are thus offensive in the sight of God. And the reason is obvious and sufficient to stop all cavilling on the subject. It is because such persons do not love God. Love to God is represented in the scriptures as the great turning point of salvation. The man who possesses this O he who possesses it not are totally different in the motives that govern them. The latter acts and feels and desires and thinks with a supreme regard to self. The former acts and feels and desires and thinks with a supreme regard to the glory of God. He at least endeavors in all things to be guided by this apostolic rule. And such an one although beset with many sins is yet acceptable to God because he has God's glory as the motive of all his conduct. But the other man is accepted in nothing because he does nothing speaks nothing and thinks nothing speaks from a regard to God's glory. Hence then we perceive that the abomination of the wicked men's sacrifice prayers actions desires and thoughts does not lie in the mere act of sacrificing or praying or ploughing or thinking: but in the motive with which these are performed.

This my hearers seems to be a scriptural answer to the enquiry made in the beginning of this discourse with what light God views the best actions thoughts and feelings of the unregenerate. Yet no doubt many will be disposed to say, *this is a hard saying: who can hear it?* And no doubt many ere this have drawn inferences from the subject. Methinks I hear the impenitent man saying - if it be true that the actions and thoughts of the unregenerate are an abomination to the Lord then all such persons ought never to pray to God nor saw the bible nor observe the Sabbath nor indeed attempt to perform every religious duty: for they will thereby only add sin and increase their everlasting condemnation. It is not perhaps to be wondered at the many men who do not look at this subject in all its bearings should be led from those passages of scripture we have quoted to draw such an inference. But I do myself believe it to be a totally false conclusion. I believe that the directly contrary inference is true and that unregenerate men are about to pray without ceasing - to read diligently the scriptures - to observe the Sabbath and every other religious duty enjoined in the bible. And you will bear with me with my hearers while I give you this reasons that have led to this opinion.

In the first place God has commanded the unregenerate to perform these duties.

No one will deny that men are commanded in scripture to pray – to search the scriptures - and to observe the Sabbath. And there is no distinction made between the wicked and the righteous and therefore these commands are binding upon every one in a Christian land. Indeed there are instances in scripture where holy men of old directed impenitent men to performance of religious duties. Christ directed those Jews to whom he said, *ye will not come unto me, to search the scriptures*. He told the young ruler who plainly was not a believer, *to go and sell all that he had and give to the poor and to come and follow him*. Peter also directed Simon Magus, *to repent and pray that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven*.

My second reason for believing that the unregenerate are bound to pray etc. is that the same argument against it will apply with equal force to everything else which they do. If they sin in praying they sin also in eating and drinking in ploughing and even in thinking as we have actually we have already seen and if they neglect on this account religious duties they must also in order to be consistent neglect to eat or drink or plough or to reap or even to think reprieve and think. A principle that leads to such results cannot be correct.

My third reason is that unregenerate men commit more sin in neglecting than in performing religious duties. If a man sin in praying to God he sins more by living without prayer - if he sins in reading the scripture he sins more heinously by omitting it. If he sin in attempting to observe the Sabbath he

doubles his transgressions by profaning it. Because in all these cases he violates a plain command: whereas no one will pretend that the scriptures command impenitent man to neglect these duties. A man commits a greater sin who robs and murders another man than if he had merely taken his purse and the thief is not as hateful in the eye of God as the murderer. Just so the man who prays though his prayer be not acceptable with God because it springs not from a right motive may notwithstanding by that prayer render himself less hateful in the view of God than if he neglected it - not because his prayer merits anything but because his sin is less heinous. If you allow the force of this argument my hearers it decides the question at once in regard to the duty of the unregenerate.

My fourth reason is that when men are specially enabled by the Holy Spirit they universally attempt religious duties. They are doubtless prompted to these by his influences and hence I conclude that these are the methods by which the Spirit brings them to repentance. And although, until they have received new hearts their services are as Solomon says an abomination to the Lord yet must we not conclude that to neglect them would be to resist the Holy Ghost and thus prove more abominable?

My fifth reason is that these religious sacrifices are eminently calculated to humble the impenitent. Let such an one attempt to pray remembering that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination and he will almost inevitably be led to see into what an awful state he is plunged by sin. Let him attempt to observe the Sabbath and his dreadful deficiency is total want of all holy feelings will teach him the same humbling truth. And so of other duties.

My sixth reason is that God usually blesses men when sincerely attempting religious duties. Probably more convicted sinners obtain relief when engaged in earnest sincere prayer than in any other state of mind. Not because their prayers are acceptable to God - but because they are not then sinning so heinous as when neglecting this duty. If God does bless men when attempting such a duty does it not show that this is the appointed way in which the Spirit leads enquiring souls to Christ?

My last reason is that God rarely if ever converts men when they neglect religious duties altogether. This man who does not pray nor read the scriptures nor observe the Sabbath can have no prospect of being converted. Experience shows that such men usually go on hardening and hardening in sin until they are given over to reprobate minds. But if it were a matter of indifference in the sight of God whether impenitent men attempt religious duties or not he would as often convert them when neglecting as when performing.

These are the reasons the word of God and experience furnish us to show that we draw the wrong inference from the subject we have been discussing when we conclude unregenerate men ought to neglect religious duties. On the other hand it clearly appears and it would seem no candid mind could resist the evidence that they are bound every moment to perform every one of these duties and that if they neglect them they have every reason to conclude themselves in the broad way to destruction. Having considered this the objection so fully because it is so often produced we have only time to make from the subject discussed two inferences.

And we learn from the subject in the first place that salvation is wholly of grace.

If as we have shown from the bible these religious duties may all the deeds words and thoughts of unregenerate men are to say the least not acceptable to God surely he does not convert anyone because he sees within him any goodness. It must be mere sovereign mercy that saves any. So that when any receives a new heart he must not impute it to his repentance or prayers or other duties none

of these having been performed from a right motive and therefore not acceptable to an holy God. The convicted sinner too who is left month after month without regenerating grace has surely no cause for complaining that he is left: for he has never performed a single act through the influence of love to God and therefore has done nothing which God can reward. And should he be left finally he can have no cause for finding fault with the justice of God since while in a state of impenitence he does nothing to merit salvation.

In the second place the subject shows us onto what an awful state impenitent men are cast by sin.

If as the bible declares their prayers their general course of life and their thoughts are an abomination to the Lord then in all these things they must be guilty of committing sin without any holiness intermingled. When therefore the unregenerate prays he sins: when he neglects prayer he sins much more - when he attempts to repent he sins: when he neglects repentance he sins much more heinously. When he observes the Sabbath he sins – and when he neglects it he doubles his transgressions. Indeed in whatever religious duty he engages he is sinful and whatever religious duty he neglects renders him much more so. Such an impenitent man is the awful state into which you are brought by your ungodly disposition. You may complain of it - you may doubt whether the bible does not exaggerate when it thus describes your condition: but this will not help you – nay it will render that condition more deplorable because such complaints and doubts will prevent your exertions for escaping from it. And indeed here is the grand difficulty with sinners they will not believe their state is so bad as the scriptures describe it. Did a man really believe himself in such a dreadful state as we have described he could not rest a moment till he had made the most desperate effort to escape from the horrible pit and the rising clay. But is not this statement of your condition ye unregenerate taken from the bible and is not that the word of God? O do not then refuse to open your eyes - do not any longer neglect that almighty arm which has so long been stretched out for your deliverance. Do not any longer again spurn away that Saviour who is knocking at the door of your heart. Your condition is now awful and desperate: but trust in Him and it shall be safe and happy and glorious forever.

Delivered

At Conway January 1822

## Sermon 90 The Present Moment the Accepted Time

[Sermon No. 90, "The Present Moment the Accepted Time," II Corinthians 6:2, 1822 Jan, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 1]

II Corinthians 6:2

*Behold now is the accepted time. Behold now is the day of salvation.*

The accepted time of which Paul here speaks is that in which man may be reconciled unto God. By nature we are all children of wrath because children of disobedience. We all are all shut up under sin. We lie under the sentence of eternal death. In order then to love God and be prepared to enjoy him in heaven the weapons of that rebellion must be cast down - we must bow our necks to his authority - must lament and weep that we have offended him and enter into a new covenant with Him to devote all our faculties to his glory forever and ever. To comply with these requirements God has given to man a day of grace and in the text the most favourable moment perhaps the only moment of this day of grace is described in the word now.

The salvation mentioned in the text is none other than that from the everlasting pains of hell to which we are all exposed continually until our peace be made with God. It is then a salvation then the most important and interesting to man that can possibly be presented to him. A deliverance from hell - from the gnawing of an undying worm and the flames of an unquenchable fire - men may not feel its value but were it offered to devils they would feel it. It is too not merely a salvation from those miseries hell contains: but it implies a restoration to the favor the love and the enjoyment of God forever in heaven. Men may not feel the value of such a salvation but angels feel it.

And yet great as is this salvation it is offered to every human being without money and without price. They have nothing to do but to accept it as a free gift of sovereign mercy. Yet so proud is the human heart - so fully set is it to do evil and so fastened to the world that there is in fact nothing more difficult than to persuade men to receive this gift from the hands of God. They cannot receive this without giving up their enmity to God and so deep rooted is this so woven is it around every fibre of the human heart that after all men prefer any sacrifice to the reception of salvation through a Saviour as an unmerited gift. Strange perversion! O how obstinate is human pride! How infatuated is it! to stand out against the threatenings and promises of an omnipotent God!

Yet notwithstanding it is the melancholy fact that the majority of men neglect the exhortations of scripture to be reconciled to God without delay and to terminate the shameful contest that is carrying on between God and their hearts notwithstanding this be true but very few are sensible that they are the persons who are acting this most unreasonable part. They can see mercy around them who are living thus infatuated and opposed to God: but they are doing all in their power to obtain salvation and they feel confident that before they die they shall have Christ for their friend. The persons who will fill hell hereafter have in general no idea that they are the persons described by Christ as going away into everlasting punishment. And why do they not know it? Because they will not faithfully search their hearts. Because they cannot get time to compare themselves with the law of God. And another important reason why they do not know that they are candidates for misery is because they flatter

themselves that tomorrow or next week or next month or next year they shall most assuredly be converted and become religious persons. Yes every impenitent man whether anxious for wisdom for his soul or not who does not now submit to Christ and is not in a state of absolute despair does calculate upon tomorrow however he may flatter himself to the contrary. And it is this expectation that has filled hell with thousands. For an apostle speaking by inspiration of God hath said, *Behold now is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation.*

In proceeding to illustrate and enforce these words we shall first endeavor to see precisely upon the time that is meant by the word now.

And this with my hearers is a very important enquiry. If a criminal under sentence of death from an earthly judge were told that if he would confess his fault at such an hour his life would be spared he would regard it as of very great importance not to be deceived in regard to the precise moment - especially would he have cause to tremble were the time mentioned to him an hour later than the judge had appointed. So man lying under sentence of everlasting death from a righteous God and having an offer of pardon on certain conditions to be performed at a certain time cannot but feel anxious to know the exact moment - which God has declared to be an accepted time and a day of salvation. Especially ought we to be solicitous not to be misinformed of the accepted time so as to be a day or an hour too late. For if through carelessness we do suffer the precious moment to pass unimproved God may meet us in judgment instead of mercy.

In the first place and I remark that the exact time mentioned in the text as an accepted time for becoming reconciled to us is the first moment of our lives in which we have the offers of salvation clearly made to us and we are old enough to understand them. As soon as we can be made to see that we are accountable beings - as soon as we can realize that we are sinners - as soon as we can be made to see the need of a Saviour that undoubtedly is the moment most easy to be reconciled to God and the most acceptable to him. That is emphatically the day of salvation. It is a time when habits of sin are least rooted and when therefore God is most willing to assist and receive the impenitent. If then there be one person present who now for the first time is able to understand that he is an accountable sinful being this moment is the most favourable time for making his peace with God that he will ever see.

But if this view of the subject be true it follows that most and probably every one of the impenitent in this house have lost their most favourable and most acceptable time for submitting to God. For it is presumed that there are none of this description present who have not lived days and months in an unregenerate state after they had arrived to such an age that they were capable of knowing and did actually know their Lord and Master as well. Yet we would indulge a hope that though their most favourable time for making their peace with God be passed they are not yet given over to reprobate minds. And if they are not we remark in the next place that there is a second best time pointed out for the purpose by the word now in the text. For so great is the mercy of God that though scarcely an individual among all mankind listen to the terms of reconciliation he offers at the most favourable time yet he ordinarily does not terminate their lives or withdraw his Spirit until the opportunities of repentance are granted to them. Among these remaining opportunities it is of great importance that we point out the best that is the second best in their lives.

Let us then endeavor negatively to fix upon the measuring of the word now in the text as it applies to this audience. And we shall arrive at the point soonest by a course of negative illustration.

And first when it is said, *now is the accepted time*, it does not mean next year or next month or next



week. Were we to judge by the practice of men we must suppose that they conclude the word now to comprehend a period of time of at least a year or month or weeks duration. For they almost universally presume upon a period as long as these before they submit to God. Yet many a man has been in eternity before the set time to attend to religion has arrived - and many others have been deserted by the Spirit of God ere that period arrived and they could find no place for repentance though they seek it earnestly with tears. So long then that life is uncertain so long as the day of grace is uncertain surely the phrase now is the accepted time now is the day of salvation cannot mean next year or next month or next week.

Neither in the second place does it mean tomorrow. When men feel the importance of religion so much as to resolve to attend to it or embrace it tomorrow they flatter themselves that they are not far from the kingdom of heaven. But when they put off the subject till tomorrow they do it at their peril. God has given them no license to do it. He has given them no promise that they will not be in hell before tomorrow. *Go to now ye that say today or tomorrow we shall go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain - whereas etc. Today if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts.*

Again by the word now again by the word now by the word now is not met the next hour. The same uncertainty of life of continuance every reason and a thing of the Spirit will apply to the next hours the next week in the next year - only there is more probability of living an hour than a year. For the shore. There is no security no promise all is uncertain.

Again by the word now is not meant the next moment. Your reason or your life or the Spirit of God may be gone before another moment and then you are lost - lost forever - given over to lie under the eternal wrath of God.

We arrive then at the meaning of the word now in the text. It is this very moment now passing. This is the accepted time - this is the day of salvation. To make our peace with God requires only that we submit to him. And this submission is merely a single act of the will - and whenever we do submit it must be done in a moment. But the present moment is the accepted one. It is the only one of which we are certain the only one of which we have any promise. The word day is indeed used in the text as the time of salvation: but it means merely during this day - that is at this moment of the day in which the offer of reconciliation is clearly made to us: for we ask if you should die before the close of this day in an unregenerate state whether you would not go to perdition and we ask as before whether you have any security of living through this day.

As before observed impenitent men have nothing to do but to submit their wills to God's terms in order to be reconciled to him. Yet there are several exercises of heart implied in the act of submission which bring up in the heart if not simultaneously yet in such rapid succession that the order of time cannot be pointed out. And it will perhaps be profitable to mention briefly as a second law of discovery the fundamental requirement God demands of the impenitent this moment.

In the first place he requires them to love him supremely. And why is not this a most reasonable requirement? Can any rational being doubt whether he is bound - whether it is for his interest - or whether it will be for his happiness to give his heart to God. Every thing in His character is supremely worthy of our love and everything in our character renders it necessary for happiness and security to fix our affections upon him. Nothing but a criminal a vile indisposition - nothing but sin prevents our loving him. And if ever we do love God this sinful indisposition must be overcome - and when is there a better time for overcoming it than this moment? Surely the next moment cannot be so favourable because

that indisposition will then evidently be stronger.

In the second place God requires the unregenerate man to repent of his sins. His language on this point is strong and decisive - *Except you repent ye shall all perish. God now commandeth all men every where to repent.* The now commandeth not next year or next month or next week or tomorrow or the next hour or the next moment - but now this moment - the final moment when he hears of the command. And indeed it is certainly easier to repent this instant than at any future period for the heart is every instant hardening and becoming more averse to repentance.

In the third place, God requires the impenitent man to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And with what an awful threatening is this command accompanied! *We that believeth not the Son shall never see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.* And what is there to hinder every man from exercising this moment a saving faith in the Redeemer? Surely there is no want of evidence to his divine mission and no man can be so blinded as not to see that he has sins that need his atoning blood. Why then delay! The difficulties in the way are every moment accumulating - and we know not how soon they may become insuperable. We ask again what is there to hinder every unregenerate man from exercising with the next thought a saving faith in Christ? There is certainly nothing which a man would not be ashamed to produce at the bar of God. And whatever excuse will not stand the trial of that day is worse than nothing.

These are the three grand fundamental requirements God demands of every man who would be reconciled to him. And can always be completed with this moment? Yes this moment impenitent sinners if your proud heart would permit you - What love God - repent of sin and exercise saving faith in Christ in a moment! It so happens in this case that these three things are inseparably connected: so that if a man love God he inevitably repents of sin and believes in Christ. If he repent of sin after a godly manner he inevitably loves God and trusts in Christ. And if he trust in Christ he inevitably repents of sin and loves God. It is evident then that a single act of the will is all that is necessary to produce these three fundamental exercises of the Christian. Let the heart be made submissive to God and the work is done.

But doubtless nearly every unregenerate man has a thousand excuses and reasons for delay. Indeed there is probably no one who feels it to be his duty this moment to give himself up into the hands of God. He feels that he is unable to do it without the Spirit of God and this is not at his command. He hopes that ere long his influence will compel his submission - and although in general terms he acknowledges his obligations to love God yet he cannot feel as if he were bound to do it this very moment. We do not expect to convince such an one of his immediate obligations: but we think it easy to show that the controversy on the subject does not lie between him and ourselves but between him and God. For has not God decidedly commanded man to love him and repent of sin and embrace Christ by faith? Probably none will deny this: but when are they to comply with these commands. If they defer them till the next moment they may till the third and fourth moment and so on forever. And to settle this question let us suppose a not improbable case. Suppose an unregenerate man to be taken dangerously sick and to call in a physician and a clergyman. The clergyman learns from the physician that the man has not more than ten minutes to live and the sick man declares that he has no hope of heaven and anxiously enquires what he must do to be saved. Now ought that minister tell this dying man that he must repent that very moment or should he tell him that he is under no obligation that moment to love God but must wait till God please to convert him although in ten minutes his soul will be in eternity.

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For should this man not feeling his immediate obligations to love God remain inactive waiting till an irresistible influence compelled him and should die in this state, we ask would not God punish him? Surely if he had not repented he must perish. But God would be an hard master to punish him if he did not deserve it; and he could not deserve it if it was utterly beyond his power to repent during those few moments.

It is most evident then that God has commanded unregenerate men to love him this moment. Whoever therefore doubts this enters into a quarrel not with me but with God. In his hands I do not fear to leave him: for when man strives against the omnipotent God we know who must be conqueror.

The first remark I have to make in view of the subject we have been considering is that had an angel from heaven who knew nothing of man except that he was called a rational and immortal being had such an one been presently and merely hear the text knowing it to be the word of God, he would conclude that every person who sat down in the audience in an unregenerate state to hear this discourse would ere the close of it give his heart to God and rise a new creature. He could not suppose it possible that any reasonable being with think it not his duty and highest intent to love God the very first moment God commanded him.

But in the second place the remark the Christian would make in view of this subject is that probably not one impenitent man has submitted to God in this house this afternoon. And why would he draw so unfavourable a conclusion? Because he knows that, *the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil and madness is in their heart while they live. And that the natural man scorneth not the things of the Spirit of God etc.*

Yet in the third place if any of you my dear hearers do neglect to submit to God this moment you do it at your peril. You are certainly tempting God who has said behold now. And if you by this neglect provoke him to abandon you, your blood will be upon your own head. If you are not prepared to trust in a Saviour today probably you will be less prepared tomorrow and it is to be feared that you will never be ready. You may say this is urging you too closely. But it is not urging you harder than the word of God urges. Time too urges us now – death urges us now - and the wrath of God after death will urge a thousand times harder. Amen

Delivered

At Conway January 1822

## Sermon 91 Marks of Friendship for the World

[Sermon No. 91, "Marks of Friendship for the World," James 4:4, 1822 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 1]

James 4:4

*Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

This is an alarming declaration and mere men faithful in applying it it would prove a caustic to eat away many of those strong cords by which they are fastened to the world. For did we realize believe that we were friends of the world in the scriptural sense and had us even a faint conception of what it is to be enemies to an omnipotent God we could no more rest easy than he, who, though lying on a silken couch surrounded by all the riches and pomp of eastern splendor, looked up and saw a glittering sword suspended over his head by a single hair. How important then for us to know whether we be indeed friends of the world - that we may thereby determine whether we are the friends or enemies of God. To this point my hearers we invite your attention in this discourse. Let us be faithful in this enquiry and if we are so we shall probably be able to determine whether our hearts have within them a friendship for our Father in heaven or an enmity towards him. Comparing ourselves with some other parts of scripture where some evidences of man's native hostility to God are pointed out we may perhaps be in doubt in regard to our opportunities to God but here we have a marker probably the plainest in the whole scriptures. A mark too that will doubtless surprise many a worldly minded man who does not suspect that his eager pursuit of the world furnishes any proof of enmity to God - a Being who is very rarely in his thoughts and toward whom therefore he feels no peculiar aversion.

The apostle James in the verse containing the text is addressing worldly minded professors of religion. *Ye adulterers and adulteresses*, says he, *know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* By adulterers and adulteresses he doubtless means those who are such in a spiritual sense - a mode of expression not uncommon in the bible especially in the prophets. The Jews to whom the apostle writes were the professed friends of God: but they idolize worldly interests and pleasures and therefore were guilty of the grossest spiritual adultery. The text is the conclusion James draws from the position he has laid down, *Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God* and what is of universal application it leads us to enquire do we idolize worldly riches or honors or pleasures? Let us compare our the tenor of our conduct and thoughts and feelings with those of one who is really a friend of the world and therefore an enemy of God.

It may be important however to state previously some things that are not inconsistent with being a friend of the world although at first thought we might suppose them to be so.

A man then may be a friend of the world in a scriptural sense who is disgusted with it. He may be placed in such circumstances that the world has lost its charms and he is satisfied that he shall never enjoy much happiness in it. But if such a man's affections are not transferred to religious objects he may still be the friend of the world. He may approve of the general practice and feelings of worldly men and he will probably find that the feelings he now possesses will soon be succeeded by an evident attachment to the world in some shape or other.

Again a man may be a friend of the world although that world treats him with neglect and oppresses him and although he haven't a single friend on earth. He may be poor and despised with scarce a place to lay his head and he may feel as if the world were a dreary and a tiresome place and still his feelings in regard to the most important of all concerns religion may be perfectly arguable to the feelings of unrenowned men generally and therefore in a scriptural sense he is their friend. All his poverty and trials may not have led him to embrace a Saviour and until this is the case although he may conceive himself hated cruelly by many of his brethren yet he is in friendly league with them and the Prince of darkness in opposing religion.

We remark too in this place that the man who has abandoned the friendship of the world for the friendship of God does not therefore cease to love his neighbor as himself. He is still a friend of the world but not a friend of the world. He is a friend to the souls of impenitent men: but not to their worldly habits and feelings. And this remark leads us to the true meaning of the phrase *friend of the world*. It implies that we approve and practice in most respects what the world does and that we neglect religion as they do – or that we are occupied supremely in seeking as they are the riches or honors or pleasures of the world. In other words it means that we prefer the world to God.

But what are the particular evidences that show us to be the friends of the world? To some of these let us attend. And it is evident from the experience of all men that for whatever object we have a friendship we shall manifest our attachment either by our actions or words or feelings or thoughts. Although a man may be compelled to be employed much about the world and converse much upon it and have his thoughts and feelings much engaged in it while he has a supreme attachment to God - and most persons are in fact so situated that they must necessarily attend much to the concerns of this life in order to provide things honest in the sight of all men: yet if they have a higher attachment to religion they will find their thoughts and feelings to run more readily towards the things of religion than the things of time and sense - even when their hands are employed in worldly avocations. So that in order to ascertain whether we are friends to the world we must compare our thoughts actions and feelings in regard to it with our thoughts actions and feelings in regard to religion.

And now my hearers we can all of us recollect in the main what we have been doing for a course of years. Does the tenor of our conduct then appear as if we had been more attached to the world than to the cause of religion? Have we are have we not pursued the riches or honors or pleasures of time and sense so ardently and exclusively as to leave little or no time for performing religious duties? We have probably by our conduct made it manifest to our fellow man that we took an interest in the worldly affairs we were engaged in: have we made it equally evident to them that we took a higher interest in religion? We have done probably almost as much as in our power to increase our property or learning or to the present ourselves and families from coming to want. Have we made as great exertions to increase in love to God and all the Christian graces are to prevent our souls and the souls of our families from perishing with a spiritual famine? Have we been as persevering and constant in praying to God and in observing all his institutions as in our worldly business? We have taught our children and dependants habits of industry and honesty between man and man - and have we set them as good an example in regard to prayer and have we taught them as faithfully to perform this duty and to be sincere and honest towards God as well as men? We have been cautious no doubt not to do anything that would diminish our property or reputation - and have we been as cautious to avoid those temptations by which our religious feelings would be diminished? We have been careful in looking over the accounts between ourselves and our neighbors: have we been as careful and faithful in looking into the much longer account between our souls and our God? My hearers there can be little difficulty in deciding from the answer conscience gives to such enquiries as these whether we have loved the world more than we

have loved God. And if we have loved the world most we have not loved God at all: for *he that is not for us says Christ is against us. No man can serve two masters - for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

Let us in the next place cordially candidly look back upon our world for a course of years. We can doubtless reflect reflect the general tenor of our conversation. We have all talked much no doubt upon our worldly concerns: and right was it that he should: but the question now is whether we have conversed more voluntarily upon the affairs of earth than those of eternity. Have we made it evident that we love religion more than we love the world? Have our nearest friends - our children and domestics - our husbands and wives been led to conclude from our religious conversation that we took a deeper interest in it than in worldly discourse? At those times and in those social circles where it was at our option to have the world or religion the topic of discourse which have we preferred? I do not ask whether we have not sometimes likened to speculate and dispute upon religion but have we loved that friend of conversation of which came directly to the heart and tended to make us look into our own bosoms? We have doubtless been fervent and engaged when our worldly rights were invested or when our worldly interests demanded: but have we been equally ready to maintain the rights of God as our Redeemer? Have we said as much against irreligious customs and habits and feelings of the world as we have said against vital godliness? Have we said as much to urge our friends and neighbors our children and domestics to attend to the concerns of their souls as we have said to induce them to make a respectable and honorable appearance among men? Conscience will give an answer my hearers to these questions and that answer will probably enable us to decide whether we have loved the world or God and whether it has been, *by our own words we shall be justified or by our own words we shall be condemned.*

In the third place what has been the tenor of our thoughts for a course of years? Most men are necessarily employed in worldly pursuits a great part of their time: but if their affections are supremely fixed upon another object their thoughts will not always be confined where their bodies are nor upon the pursuits of their hands. David meditated much upon the law of God because he loved it supremely - and so the man who loves the world supremely will meditate upon it much and upon the truths of the bible but little are our thoughts then involuntarily turned to the subject of religion and dwelt upon them when we were engaged in the affairs of this life? Or have they generally been occupied upon worldly plans or pleasures? When we lie down at night upon our pillows and when we awake in the morning are our reflections usually upon God and Christ and heaven and hell - our own hearts and the means of promoting the Redeemer's kingdom or are they upon the world - upon its riches or honors or pleasures? I do not ask whether we may not have had religious reflections at particular seasons of life as in adversity (are during a revival of religion) but has the general course of thought with us been religious or worldly? For our thoughts will run where our affections are placed and if they are placed on religion the thoughts will incline to religion: but if these fixed supremely on the world these will fasten upon the world. Where the treasure is there will the heart be also. We ask then again my hearers and we ask it with emphasis because we believe you may hereby decide whether you are the friend of God or of the world, we ask where have your thoughts been most naturally - into the channels of the world are into the channels of religion? Which seems most natural for you to reflect upon - the world or upon God and eternity?

In the fourth place let us make some enquiry concerning the usual state of our feelings. And here we may enquire properly what has been the motive of our conduct generally? We have perhaps been engaged in worldly pursuits considerably - and now did we usually stop at the beginning of every enterprise and enquire whether we could promote that for God's glory? Or did we feel pleasure in

reflecting upon the personal gratification we should experience from its successful accomplishment. Have we felt a desire to become rich and that we might promote the cause of Christ more extensively and if we should become more eminent in society have we felt a desire to throw the additional weight of our influence into the scale that would favor religion? Which has caused us the most anxious feelings our worldly concerns or the concerns of our souls? Which has caused us the most sleepless hours the fear of failing in the acquisition of wealth fame and pleasure or the fear of failing finally of heaven? Which has produced within us the greatest anxiety and regret to meet with losses in our own temporal affairs or to see the cause of Christ declining? We have often heard religious conversations - has this afforded us more pleasure than conversation about the farm the money and the merchandise? Do we feel more animated and better pleased to converse upon practical religion with a devoted Christian than upon our worldly possessions with a man of business? In which kind of conversation would a stranger conclude us more interested? Do we take more pleasure in reflecting upon our property - or our reputation - or our anticipated sensual pleasures that upon the subjects of eternity? Which do we feel most willing to neglect our prayers are reading of the or our plans for growing rich and reputable? Which day of the seven is most pleasant to us the Sabbath or a weekday? On which of them do we feel most animated? To which are we most likely to be drawn by our own feelings - to a prayer meeting a (religious assembly or to a pleasure party) or a visiting party? Do we feel more interested that our children if we have any shall make a respectable figure in the world than that they shall obtain religion? Are we more prone to notice and remark upon a man's conduct if he neglects his worldly affairs than if he neglects religion? Do we feel more rejoiced at the increase of the Redeemer's kingdom among men than at the increase of our worldly treasures? Do we at times feel as great anxiety for the conversion of our children and friends and neighbors as we should for their rescue if we saw them asleep in a burning building? Do we take more pleasure in secret devotions than in reflecting in secret upon our plans of a worldly nature?

Now my hearers, if we put it to our consciences to answer all these questions relating to the general tenor of our current conduct our words and our thoughts and our feelings as in the fear of God and in view of his final judgment can there be any difficulty in deciding whether we are the friends of the world? We must forget whatever professions we have made to the contrary - we must be honest and sincere to know the extent truth on the subject - and it would seem we could not mistake whether we love the world or not.

And what if any of us are compelled to acknowledge (as there is every reason to fear very many of us ought to acknowledge) that we do love and have long loved the world - what is the conclusion? The apostle has drawn it - *whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the etc.* A dreadful conclusion! An enemy of God! An enemy of that Being in whose hands is our breath - who guides the lightning and rolls the thunder of heaven - before whom *the nations are driven asunder the everlasting mountains are scattered and the perpetual hills do bow* - an enemy to that omnipotent God who is angry with the wicked every day and who has prepared an eternal press where in his fierceness and wrath he will tread them down forever and ever.

But we have no time to draw out the frightful picture. We could describe to you the contest of man with man or of an inert weakness a lion's strength but we cannot describe the combat of man with his God. We can only say, *let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth: but woe unto him that striveth with his Maker.* We cannot dismiss the subject without a few inferences.

And in the first place we see how very possible it is for a person who is amiable and upright among men and strictly moral to be nevertheless an enemy of God. Such an one may love the world - he may be the

friend of the world and yet not have God in all his thoughts. His whole soul may be fixed upon the riches or honors or pleasures of time and sense and therefore in despite of all his amiableness in despite of his honesty and uprightness and feelings of honor he is an enemy of God. The proof of his enmity lies not in any positive opposition to God but simply in the fact that he is a friend of the world - and if the world of our text be true this is sufficient proof.

In the second place we learn from the subject why so many such persons find a difficulty in realizing and believing that they are the enemies of God. Such men (when charged with enmity to God) say that they do not feel within them any thing like an opposing spirit. They are not sensible of any hostility to God's character or laws. And the reason is they cannot conceive that enmity would exist within them unless it manifest itself by positive acts of rebellion. They expect if it be true that they shall feel their hearts rising against God with the most willful opposition. Whereas if the text be the truth they have only to enquire of themselves whether they are friends of the world and if they find that they are the bible declares them enemies of God. They may not feel any hostility within their bosom so long as God does not disturb their consciences as they do not trouble themselves to enquire about God - but if they love the world supremely their dispositions their thoughts and actions are in fact directly opposed to his will (for that which is highly appraised among men appraised among men is an abomination in the sight of God) and what can this be but enmity. We believe many moral and amiable man do feel it be an unjust and false charge upon them to call them enemies of God: but we apprehend if they will only attend to the proof of it God has given in the text they can no longer be in doubt.

And now my hearers what if the man seen by Ezekiel in vision clothed in linen and with an inkhorn by his side were commanded by God to go through this audience as he went through the midst of Jerusalem and to set a mark upon the forehead of every one of us who are the friends of the world! What if he were to stamp upon such living characters the inscription, *an enemy of God!* What blushing! What hiding of face should we witness! For there is every reason to fear my hearers that many of us are the friends of the world and therefore enemies of God. And if we are his enemies we cannot be happy without a change of heart. God never will submit to us and we must submit to him. Today the bow of mercy shines in heaven and the sword of salvation proclaims peace through a Saviour's blood. Tomorrow you may see the bloody flag rising on the portals of heaven. Tomorrow the storm of almighty wrath may be gathering in the skies - and on the third day of it may burst. And when you find the earth falling under your feet the burning vengeance of an angry Jehovah sweeping you down to the bottomless pit, closing upon you its iron gate forever and ever, then will you know what it is to be a friend of the world and an enemy of God.

Delivered

At Conway January 1822  
 At Whately January 1822  
 At Muddy Brook 1822  
 At Ashfield February 1823  
 At Braintree June 1823  
 At Deerfield July 1829  
 At Northampton May 1837



## Sermon 92 Characters Who Will Finally Perish

[Sermon No. 92, "Characters Who Will Finally Perish," Isaiah 33:14, 1822 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 1]

Isaiah 33:14

*Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?  
Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?*

*[Very dramatic final paragraph: "Lord, Is it I?"]*

Are these enquiries my hearers directed to us in this house? Yes - as much as to any other members of the human family. But can it be that there are any in this house whose fate will be thus awful? Yes there is every probability that some of us in this assembly when we lift up our eyes in hell being in torments shall recollect this day and this text - only to aggravate that devouring fire and those everlasting burnings. For certain it is if the bible be true that a part of mankind will go away into everlasting misery and we have never yet heard of that parish or town in which there were not many whose lives gave decisive evidence that they were not prepared for heaven and therefore must have gone to perdition. Nay we have never yet heard of a parish or town in which there was not a majority who would not themselves acknowledge that they have no gospel hope of happiness beyond the grave. And there is reason to conclude that where the Lord Jesus Christ to enter this assembly and enquire of every one of us whether we have been born again the majority of us should answer no. But *except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God*. And we know that if a man does not enter the kingdom of God at death he must enter the kingdom of darkness. Should our souls then be required of us now there is every reason to fear that a large proportion of us who are in this house would be the individuals who are to dwell with the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings. We know not indeed but God may convert many of this majority before we are actually called out of time into eternity and would to God all might be saved! But it is an undoubted fact that the majority of men on their deathbeds manifest no good evidence of regeneration - very few indeed in that trying hour remain unalarmed - but it is one thing to be alarmed and quite another to be converted. And if a majority of men in past generations have died probably the enemies of God - there can be little doubt but a majority of the present generation will die in the like awful condition.

If then the scriptures and experience render it certain that some of our souls will perish forever nay that some in every parish in every neighborhood and I might almost say in every family are of this number it becomes a most important and interesting enquiry - *who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?* Who are the individuals in this place that will hereafter be cast into outer darkness? Is it you or is it I? My hearers, it is not from me to assume the prerogative of Jehovah to judge the heart and to set the mark upon this or that person as those who are given over to eternal destruction. But it is my duty because the scriptures have done it to exhibit as plainly as possible to the marks which he who is a candidate for external misery carries about him. For the truth is that in most cases the sacred writers have described the character of the men who will dwell with everlasting burnings as plainly as it is possible for language to express. And the reason why so many of those who are ripe for destruction do not know it is not because it is a hard matter to determine that

they are enemies of God because their understandings are darkened being alienated from the life of God and they will not faithfully compare themselves with the scriptures.

What then are the marks by which a man may know assuredly that unless his character be changed he must be *trodden down in the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of the Almighty God*? These marks although essentially alike in all are modified in different individuals. We shall endeavor to point out the most prominent of them.

We might (in this place proceed) to state that the man who does not love God supremely and his neighbor as himself – who has never been regenerated and who does not repent of his sins is under eternal condemnation and must sink forever into misery if he remains unchanged. But this would be too too general a statement for my present purpose. I prefer to set before you some of those unequivocal indicators that evince men not to love God nor to have a new heart nor to repent.

And in the first place one mark a candidate for everlasting burnings often bears about him is an indulgence in habitual known sin.

Need I repeat my fears that he who is an adulterer - he who is a fornicator - he who is unclean - he who is lascivious - he who is effeminate - he who is an adulterer – a Sodomite - a covetous person - a thief - an extortioner - a drunkard – a reviler - that he is envious of others - he who indulges natural hatred towards his brother - or a spirit of unholy emulation and discord - a spirit of wrath and strife and heresy in the church – that he who practices unreasonable and immoderate surfeiting and revelling - that all such cannot inherit the kingdom of God? When we see men given over habitually to these palpable violations of the law of God we are all ready to pronounce of them that they are fitted for hell and must go there except they repent. They bear the marks of reprobation on their foreheads as distinctly as did Cain. And yet such is the infatuation and madness of the human heart that very many who practice daily some one or more of these sins and who profess to believe and read the bible live along totally fearless and careless about their eternal destiny.

A second mark of a heart prepared for the devouring fire is a spirit of unbelief. Were we to reason on the subject we should conclude beforehand that if Satan were ripening a man for eternal ruin he would fill him with a dark and deep rooted scepticism. For were the sinner really to believe in the great doctrines and declarations of the scriptures he could not but perceive that he lay under condemnation and was an enemy of God. And the man who really and distinctly perceives this to be his condition could not rest easy a single moment but would be in the greatest anxiety and distress until he was reconciled to God. But disbelief affords an admirable remedy for laying asleep the conscience and passing quietly on onwards to hell. And accordingly we find in many places of scripture that unbelief is one of the decisive evidences that men are to dwell with the cleansing fire and everlasting burnings. And scepticism is not like many sensual indulgences which are apt to cloy and leave the disgusted sinner time for reflection: but it grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength so that all of all descriptions of sin it is the least likely to be eradicated. And therefore habitual unbelief in the reality of fundamental doctrines of religion is the most decisive marks of a mind prepared for eternal torments. And from the scriptures we find the unbeliever and the hypocrite will have their bed together in hell.

A third mark showing that he who wears it is preparing for everlasting burnings is to have a form of godliness and to deny the power thereof. There have been not infrequent instances in Christian lands of those who would give their most hearty assent to every truth and every precept of revelation and who would profess to have been born again and to take a deep interest in religion and to be zealous in its

promotion who nevertheless manifested by their conduct that they had neither part nor lot in the matter. *They profess that they know God but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient and unto every good works reprobate.* They have that kind of faith which exhibits no works - they say unto Christ Lord Lord but keep not his commandments. And there are others of this clan who observe a strict morality and attend perpetually to all the external duties and ordinances of the Gospel but who nevertheless deny that a man must be born again of water and the Spirit in order to enter heaven - and do not believe that Christ died for our sins - that is they deny his atonement and yet these professors hope soon to enter heaven. But this having the form of godliness while its power is denied is one of the most certain evidences a man can exhibit that he is a candidate for the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings. For rarely very rarely are such persons on undeceived and converted. Satan has drawn them into such a snare and wound around them so many cords that little short of a miracle is necessary to deliver them. When *they say peace and safety then sudden destruction cometh upon them and they have not escaped.*

And my hearers if there be any among us who bear those marks upon their foreheads it is by no means probable one of them will suppose that he belongs to the number of those who are to feel the devouring fire gnawing them in eternity. Neither is it probable that if there be any of us indulging such a spirit of unbelief as we have described as a mark of reprobation neither is it probable that such will feel that they are aimed at in the text. For most men have an idea that they have a full faith in all that is essential to their salvation. Nor is it likely that one of that one of us supposes that he indulges in such a course of open sin as on this account to be presented heaven. For men whose habits of transgression are not outrageously enormous are generally ignorant that things have such habits - and it is no infrequent case to hear a confirmed slanderer reprobating and evil speaking of an established drunkard or condemning intemperance. And as for those who are so far gone in open sin that even themselves cannot be ignorant of it, they are rarely if ever to be seen within the house of God. Some other marks therefore less difficult of application than those we have given above seem to be required. And we have two such marks at hand which are easy of application. We say then that the man who has gone through many scenes of deep affliction without being thereby led to embrace a Saviour without becoming religious has the utmost reason to conclude that he is one of those who are to dwell with the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings. For no other means under heaven are probably so powerful so calculated to produce convictions as those severe trials and separations of earthly friends by death which at once make tender the heart and show us the vanity of every earthly prop. And if at such a season our thoughts are not led to religion - if we do not then actually arise and enquire with the deepest earnestness what we must do to be saved, if in short our afflictions do not prove the means of our real conversion to God (and works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory - certainly if a repetition of these afflictions do not produce this effect) there is evidently great reason to conclude that nothing else on earth will awaken us and that we are hardening and hardening for enduring the everlasting wrath of God. For again we ask what other thing is there on earth so likely to answer us as deep and repeated afflictions? God in sovereign mercy may indeed after all interpose by his Spirit and reach our learned consciences - but rarely does he thus interfere and alas facts show that such men usually pass on through life without God and without hope and die ripe for destruction.

The next mark we shall mention which is to be found will show many of us even in this place to be preparing to dwell with everlasting burnings is an unconcern and stupidity concerning our condition even when we know that we are unprepared for heaven. Of all the viles practised by the great adversary for deluding men to distraction this is the most effectual and certain. He knows that when men are once alarmed at their awful condition they will make every effort in their power to escape the flames of hell and he knows that very many who have been awakened have been brought to embrace religion. He

therefore exerts all his energies to keep them in stupidity – and to hide then their situation from their view. He tries to lull asleep the voice of conscience and endeavors to divert their attention from their danger by spreading a brighter charm over the world by covering up the pit of hell and he conceals the glories of heaven from their view. He often persuades them to avoid religious meetings on the Sabbath and at other times and continues to turn their attention from the matter to the manner of the preacher and to dispose them to reflect upon the faults of his performance rather than upon those truths he has uttered with utterly condemn them. And so long as Satan can keep up this delusion and prevent men from being alarmed at their condition he has no fears that they will be plucked out of his hands. If he can lull them asleep and if he can prolong that sleep he has nothing to fear. While they slumber he can and he does entangle them more and more in his charms and rivet them forever and forever upon the miserable victims. While thus asleep he does not fear that the most alarming providences or the most awakening sermons will have any effect upon them - and while in a state of unconcern Satan himself knows that they have upon them the marks of his subjects and unless they are aroused he knows that he is sure of having them home for his companions in the everlasting burnings.

My hearers do look at this solemn subject again. There is a man who knows not but his truth may be stopped the next moment and who knows that he has never had a change of heart and is therefore unprepared to go to heaven and yet his awful condition does not alarm him. He can read his eternal doom in the scriptures with the utmost unconcern. He can hear the joys and glories of heaven described from the pulpit without any regret that he must lose them. He can have all the terrors of hell laid open before him - he can be told to look into the bottomless pit and see the smoke of his torments ascending up forever and ever - he can be shown the very bed in hell which he is doomed to occupy he can see the worm that is to gnaw him there and he can see the devouring fire flashing in his face and yet by all this be unmarked and unaffected. Nay in a single moment his thoughts can be diverted from this tremendous picture and be wholly occupied by this paltry world.

And now my brethren if such a man does not carry upon his forehead the marks reprobation - if he does not by the stupidity and neglect of religion give evidence that he is one of those who will hereafter lift up their eyes in hell being in torments - if he does not show that he is fully bent upon destruction we know of no evidence that can show it.

Certainly while he continues thus stupid and careless we have every reason to conclude that he will dwell with the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings - and not the shadow of any evidence to the contrary – (And doubly forcible is this conclusion if a man who knows that he is not prepared for death and eternity remains unawakened and anxious during a revival of religion-). The most abandoned of men the most openly corrupt do not exhibit any more decisive marks than such a man of being a candidate for eternal destruction. If God were to set his seal upon any of our race as given over to everlasting burnings we should presume that he would have them in precisely the condition in which we find the stupid the carelessly unconcerned sinner until we see such awakened therefore we have awful reason to conclude and to fear that they are thus abandoned of God and that they will weep and wail and gnash their teeth forever and ever.

To conclude this discourse let us make in a supposition.

Let it be supposed that a foreign enemy powerful and bloody makes war upon us and our national government sends into this place demanding then able bodied men to be detached to go forth to meet the enemy and that a bloody battle is soon expected and these men are to be placed in the forefront of it. How tremblingly anxious should we all be to know who were the individuals selected to the

dangerous enterprise!

But suppose instead of ten men that an hundred were demanded. What anxiety and distress would pervade every bosom until the selection was made and how many tears would be wept over the victims taken.

And yet my hearers if it be true as stated in the beginning of this discourse that (a large proportion) the majority of men in every place of religious society die without hope then is it in fact true that there are not merely ten or an hundred but several hundreds of us in this place whom the Prince of darkness has already selected for dwelling with the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings. And although we know not the individuals yet God knows them all. He knows who of us will die without religion. He knows that a great multitude will die without religion. But although so many of us are soon to be cast into outer darkness yet how little conversation does it excite among us to know who these persons are - and how little anxiety for their fate. How much greater interest would be felt by the drafting of ten men for the army than by the drafting of hundreds for hell! Yet the day is coming when we shall hear the judge who makes the selection call them all by their names. And who is this that is called first? Ah it is a neighbor. Who comes next? It is an intimate friend. Who next? A wife - next? a husband? Who next? A father! Who next a mother! Who next a brother! Who next! A sister! Who next! A child! Who next! Lord is it I?

Delivered

At Conway February 1822

At Amherst West Parish July 24 1831

At Amherst College November 1833

## Sermon 94 Why a Revival Ceases

[Sermon No. 94, "Why a Revival Ceases," Nehemiah 6:3, 1822 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 1]

Nehemiah 6:3

*Why should the work cease?*

For several months (Sabbaths) I have chiefly directed my Sabbath discourses to those who are living without God and without hope. I have endeavored to hold up a plain and faithful exhibition of their situation. I have not disguised from them that their danger is imminent and have most earnestly solemnly and repeatedly announced to them that except they repent they must perish except they be born again they cannot see the kingdom of God. To alarm them to a sense of their desperate condition and the necessity of immediate escape from it I have striven to lay open heaven and hell: to hold up before them on the one hand the fruit of the tree of life and on the other hand the dreary abyss of damnation. These great truths and motives I have presented again and again before the impenitent but alas! It is to be feared that they begin to fall on their ears as an idle tale and that they do not reach the heart or the conscience. Solemn and tremendous as are these truths I have reason to fear that they are unproductive of any permanent influence upon the aggregate among us except to harden their hearts and that they are regarded as the ravings of a heated imagination and a deluded heart rather than the sober truths of God's word. This day therefore Christian brethren turn to you - and I have no address to make to the impenitent - not because I realize their condition to be less dangerous - not because I do not feel an earnest desire that all such may be saved - but because I have not the faith to believe that I can present any stronger motives before them than I have already presented and because I fear the Spirit of God given and resisted so long cannot consistently with the perfections of God accompany to the hearts the preaching of the Gospel. Under a view thus disheartening Christian brethren I turn to you. Your prayers and exertions are the last hope. Of you I enquire, *Why should the work cease?* Why should that work of God which he has been manifesting for a considerable time among us in snatching sinners *out of the horrible pit and the misery day*, why should this work cease and the Spirit of God that only comforts under heaven - depart from us - leaving us to follow on in our chosen way - leaving us to return from the enjoyment of religion to the beggarly elements of the world desiring again to be in bondage like the dog to his vomit - like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire!

But previously to entering upon a reply to this enquiry a few words are necessary to explain the text. During the time in which the Jews were captive in Babylon Jerusalem was suffered to go to ruin - and the Lord purposing to rebuild it and thus prepare the way for a glorious reformation of manners and habits stirred up his devoted steward Nehemiah to fasting and prayer and at length at the command of the Chaldean monarch came to Jerusalem and began to rebuild its walls. But there he found powerful enemies among whom Sanballat Tobiah and Geshem were leaders. These at first scoffed at the idea that Nehemiah should be able to accomplish so great a work with such feeble means. But seeing it go forward prosperously they endeavored openly to drive the workmen from the walls. Being frustrated in this attempt they have recourse to stratagem - and writing several letters to Nehemiah invited him to a friendly conference on the plain of Ono having placed a party in ambush to murder him by the way.

Nehemiah however replied to them saying, *I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease whilst I leave it and come down to you?* This work was the rebuilding and repairing of the walls of the city of Jerusalem. Now as the church is frequently called Jerusalem in scripture we may by an easy transition apply these words of Nehemiah to the work of God in His plan for building up Zion.

And in the first place if this work does cease it will not be because God is unwilling to continue it.

What is the will of God in regard to man's salvation? The scriptures declare that, *He is not willing any should perish but that all should come to repentance.* It may be said however that although God is willing all men should come to repentance yet when they have long abused his grace and resisted his Spirit his further demands that his Spirit be withdrawn from them and they be left to harden themselves in sin. This however is attempting to pry into the secret councils of God: but his revealed will is that by which we ought to be governed. *The secret things, says Moses, belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children.* Now it is the revealed will of God that all men every where be commanded to repent - we are therefore to urge this command upon all men and not secretly presume that they are given over to reprobate minds. It is the revealed will of God that the Holy Spirit shall be given to them that ask it - and unless God be a liar he will fulfill this promise. Christians are told that if they will ask they shall receive - if they will seek they shall find - and certainly if God gives over the impenitent to sin he will not neglect his own elect who cry day and night unto him and surely there is no need of his works of revival terminating among them if it cease among others. Indeed it is a scriptural doctrine plainly falling from the promises above alluded to that God never would leave his work of grace in any place were his children faithful on their part in cherishing the influences of the Spirit and in their duty to others. We doubt whether he would ever cease to convict and convert unregenerate men so long as any such remain - be it if it be supposed in any case that such might be abandoned to reprobation certainly he would carry on his works in the hearts of his children even to the end of the world. Nay do we not see instances of this around us? That some churches are more devoted and engaged in religion than others cannot be denied - and we shall all allow that it is the Spirit of God who maketh them to differ. Why then may not these churches most awake in the service of God be said to experience a constant revival? Indeed my brethren the declaration of God to Asa is strictly true in regard to all his children - *The Lord is with you while you be with him; and if you seek him he will be found of you: but if ye forsake him he will forsake you.* It is not the will of God that his work among us should cease and so many be left to destruction: *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye turn ye for why will you die O house of Israel?*

In the second place if this work ceases it will not be because there are no more souls among us who need its converting or sanctifying influences.

Are there none among us who profess religion who demand a continuance of the special influences of the Spirit to keep them from an undue conformity to the world? Are we all of us even in times of religious delusion faithful to our closets and to our compassions and piety? (If there be no others among us I can testify that there is one who lives so far from God even in this time of revival and who remembers how much farther in times of stupidity he did live from Him that he looks forward with anxious distress to that period and earnestly hopes it may never come when these gracious influences that are now showered down upon us shall be withdrawn and he shall be left to hardness of heart and again to desire to feed upon the husks of this world in preference to their spiritual manna from heaven.

And are there no more souls among us my brethren who need conversion? Are there none here who have no hope in Christ and who have withstood hitherto all the motives presented before them and all the strivings of the Spirit during this revival yet remain as unconcerned and have become more hardened than ever? Are there none who feel the importance of religion but who are still halting between two opinions and from whom the Spirit of God is insensibly withdrawing? Can anyone doubt the fact that there are many very many who are permitting this work to pass by without sharing in it? Come then and let us approach at a distance a dwelling in which reside Christian parents. It is midnight and as we listen at their door is it the voice of mirth and reveling that we here? Or is it the voice of prayer? It is prayer - that father and that mother now that their family have retired to bed are kneeling together and breathing out their earnest supplications to Almighty God for their unregenerate child a member of this institution who remains unanxious and stupid in this day of God's power. O with what fervency do they implore that an arrow of conviction may reach the heart of that impenitent son (or daughter) before this (term) work shall cease! How do the tears of anxiety and distress trickle down their cheeks as they (reflect again) implore mercy again and again for their offspring and feel as if they could not give over their wrestling without a blessing! (And yet the eye of God we trust sees daily many such prayers as this in this town. And with that they were multiplied – then might we still hope that this work would not cease.)

God will not withdraw his Spirit because he is unwilling to continue longer his work nor because he does not see any more souls and to revive or convert among us. *Why then should the work cease?* If it does cease the fault must certainly lie with ourselves Christian brethren. And yet it would seem scarcely possible if God were waiting to convert souls among us and nothing were wanting but our faithfulness one would suppose it impossible he could remain insensible when such momentous consequences are dependant. But alas! *Although the Spirit is willing we fear the flesh is weak.*

Permit me then in the final place to enquire whether this work must cease because Christian professors are beginning to neglect secret special prayer?

If it be the fact that we are less frequent in our closets and less earnest in our entreaties for sinners depend upon it brethren the work is about to cease: for God will be enquired of to do this for us. The exact state of a revival of religion may be estimated by the frequency and fervency of believers prayers. Why should God continue to convert souls when his children will not use the means of their conversion? And why should the Christian relax in his prayers when God answers them almost as soon as made? Whether it be the fact that fewer and less fervent prayers are just put up by this church and others who love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ is not my brethren for me to say. But we can each one of us answer the enquiry to God – and if our closets do witness against us, O there must be a reformation.

I enquire in the second place whether this work must cease because Christians begin to lose their anxiety for the impenitent?

If the Spirit of God be withdrawing they will assuredly find themselves less solicitous about their unrenewed friends. And yet at such a time how much greater cause have they for anxiety and distress on their account! If they have lived through a revival unaffected how much harder have their hearts become! How much more powerful an influence from the Spirit is necessary to arouse them now than in the beginning of the work! How alienated are their feelings from all who have been active in the service of Christ and how disgusted with experimental piety! And how much less is the probability that they will ever become reconciled to God! Can it be then that any of you my brethren should not find within you an increasing instead of a decreasing anxiety for the impenitent?



In the third place I enquire whether this work must cease because Christ Christians have not faith in the power and willingness of God to convert greater number of souls?

What cause have we my brethren for increased faith in the readiness of God to carry on his work when he has performed such wonders among us notwithstanding our extreme unworthiness for such mercies! Yet how prone are we I know not from what cause to distrust such a merciful and forbearing and somber working God! And probably it is not among the least of our sins that we are faithless and unbelieving! And if it be indeed true as it often is the case that in proportion to the evidence we have had of God's willingness to carry on the work we find our faith in him to decrease it is an alarming evidence that the work is about to cease - *Lord increase our faith - Lord we believe; help thou our unbelief.*

I enquire in the fourth place whether this work must cease because our communion seasons have been kept so on unworthily?

Have we been faithful at such times to enter into a deep and thorough searching of heart? Have we seen more of an opposition to holiness than on other occasions - have we felt more hatred of sin - and more ingenuous sorrow for it when we saw the emblems of a crucified Redeemer set before us - have we gone from these communion seasons with new resolutions - with a renewed covenant with God and feeling new courage to encounter the enemies of our souls? Have we felt at those seasons more deeply than at any other how dreadful was the condition of the impenitent and have we had more earnest longings for their salvation? If such feelings as these have not possessed our hearts in an eminent degree during this work of God among us does it not furnish alarming evidence that the work must cease - unless indeed we resolve that this day by the grace of God shall see us come around the communion board more humble more prayerful more penitent than ever yet we have done. The Great Searcher of hearts knows our resolutions and may he give us grace thus to act and instead of ceasing may this day and the work of God revive anew!

In the fifth (fourth) place I enquire whether the work must cease because Christians are becoming tired of it?

It is a melancholy fact that such is sometimes the case. Nor is it more difficult to account for than the wish of the children of Israel to return to Egypt - to submit again to civil bondage could they but the fish and cucumbers the melons and leeks - the onions and the garlick - of that country. Although God led them by a constant miracle and fed them with manna - yet they preferred the bondage and ignominy of Egypt - rather than undergo the self denial of the wilderness. So the Christian during a revival of religion is fed with manna from heaven: and enjoys a peculiar presence of God and peculiarly bright evidences of eternal glory - yet it is a season of self denial and he remembers with fondness those unleashed pleasures of the world of which he is now deprived and charged to tell he often prefers to abandon his God and his communion and without those comforts he derives from a life of conformity to God for the fleeting purposes and unsatisfying pleasures of the world. It was a deep note depravity that caused the Israelites to wish to return to Egypt. It is a deep rooted depravity - a vile attachment to sensual indulgences that induces the professed Christian to wish himself free from serving God so constantly and fervently. And when this feeling prevails in a church it is an awful evidence that God will leave them to their chosen way. And it is a serious question whether he will not swear as he did to the Israelites that they shall never enter into his rest. For if the professed disciple of Christ can prefer the pleasures of this world to those high and pure pleasures he enjoys during a special outpouring of the Spirit is it not well

worth his enquiring whether he loves God at all.

In the last place I enquire whether this work must cease because Satan will draw off professed Christians by stratagem?

You remember how many methods were taken by the enemies of Nehemiah to prevent his building Jerusalem. And Satan employs many more during a revival to induce Christians to desist and abandon the undertaking. At one time by scoffs and ridicule he endeavours to render it unpopular and helps thus to shame the believer out of it. At another time he calls it delusion and enthusiasm and urges the sober rational Christians to discourage it. At another time he describes its effects as tending to break up the closet friendships and array the dearest relations against one another and as contrary to the bible as did Sanballat to Nehemiah when he said, *will ye rebel against the king?* But the most dangerous method Satan takes to oppose this is by attempting to draw him off from the work and hold a parley with the world. He tries to persuade the believer that he can devote a little more time to worldly concerns than he has done he spreads an alluring charm over the objects of sense and strews flowers before him inviting him to tread such a path. He endeavours too if possible to direct his attention from experimental godliness to unprofitable disputations about speculative matters. He stirs up a thousand objections and cavils during a revival and endeavors to persuade the Christian it is his duty to answer them all by arguments - instead of doing as Christ did when asked, *whether there were few that be saved - who replied strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in but shall not be able.* If once the adversary can persuade the Christian to leave his post and come down to have a parley with him on these subjects that moment the work ceases and the Christian is betrayed for there are murderers lying in ambush for him as soon as he abandons the revival. If Satan can stir up any petty dispute among the members of the church he knows that his point is taken and that the work will cease. We ought therefore Christian brethren to be peculiarly on our guard against this vile and cunning oppose of the work of grace among us. We ought not to be ignorant of his devices. Let us remember that during such a time as we have been enjoying in this place his malice is provoking to the utmost and he is indeed a roaring lion among us seeking whom he may devour and we ought to recollect too that if we resist the devil he will flee from us. And the armour with which he is most successfully resisted is faith and prayer. (And depend upon it brethren that he will assault us more.)

And now my Christian friends I ask your solemn attention to the questions I have proposed to you whether the glorious work of God among us is about to cease because you neglect secret prayer - or have less anxiety for the impenitent - or want faith in God - (or observe so unworthily the Lord's supper) - or because we are becoming tired of it or are drawn off from it by the stratagems of Satan? These are solemn enquiries for us all and it is high time we put them to our consciences as in the fear of God. For as a watchman on the walls of Jerusalem I cannot but warn you ever at the appearance of danger. I must in duty to God and young souls proclaim with a low voice that ere you are aware of it this revival will be gone unless you battle on more firmly the garrison of God. And Oh if we should thus grieve away the Spirit of God I see in imagination the judgments that will follow. I see (our much loved Zion sitting solitary as a widow - *I see her ways mourning because none come to her solemn feasts - Yeh Zion spreadeth forth her hands and there is none to comfort her?*) I see the abomination of desolation polluting the sanctuary of God. Already I seem to see you on your death bed weeping that you grieved away the blessed Spirit - thus brought darkness into your souls. Already I hear your children (companions) who neglects this revival crying in the agonies of a dying moment. O how have I hated instruction my heart despised reproof! The harvest is past etc.

Delivered

At Conway March 1822

At Amherst College May 6 1827

## Sermon 95 Works of God

[Sermon No. 95, "Works of God," Psalms 104:24, 1821 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 2]

Psalms 104:24

*O Lord how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hath thou made them all.*

David was an ardent admirer of the works of God in their three great departments of nature of providence and of grace. His view of the works of creation did not as with many modern philosophers lead to universal scepticism but inspired within him a deeper reverence for God's character and a more ardent zeal in his cause. Whenever he cast his eyes around him upon the universe his thoughts were constantly reminded of his Father in heaven - *The heavens, says he, declare thy glory and the firmament showeth thine handy works. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge - I meditate on all thy works I muse on works of thy hands.* Solomon too it seems pushed his enquiries into every department of nature. For it is said of him that, *he spake of trees from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto this hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts and of fowl and of creeping things and of fishes.* And the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes testify how acute was his observance of God providence and grace. You remember too how frequently Job appeals to the works of God and how minutely and sublimely he describes them. *Ask now the beasts, says he, and they shall teach thee and the fowls of the air and they shall tell thee. Or speak to the earth and it shall teach thee and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?*

And you well know that the book of Job is made up of a debate concerning God's providence and that it was the grace of God which enabled that patriarch to say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body yet in my flesh shall I see God.*

The text we have chosen on this occasion naturally leads us after the example of these ancient servants of God to take a general survey of the works of nature - the works of providence and the works of grace. And first let us consider the work of creation that is the work of nature.

We have not time to examine the connection between the several parts and beings in the universe although this would be a most interesting work - nor have we time to trace the wonderful organization of any individual creature or thing. The Psalmist when he says, *O Lord how manifold are thy works*, was evidently contemplating merely the countless multitude and variety of the creation of God - and we wish now to follow this same thought and shall endeavour to set before you an enumeration so far as is possible of the organized and unorganized the animate and inanimate parts of the universe.

And here let it be remarked that in the works of God there is a wonderful succession or gradation from the most perfect and complicated to mere dead matter. There is a connected chain of beings from man down to the dust under our feet and every individual link in this chain differs but slightly from that next above it. In our enumeration we shall begin with man who evidently occupies the next place below

angels and stands at the head of this lower creation and then endeavor to follow this chain throughout till we arrive at inanimate matter.

All the individuals of the human race constitute but one species all having sprung from Adam and Eve. That is if we believe the bible to be true we must suppose this to be the case. And the varieties in the human countenance and stature in different countries are with little difficulty accounted for by natural causes without supposing these varieties to constitute different species descending from different progenitors. It is impossible to know precisely the number of human beings now alive on the whole globe. A moderate estimate however will make them 800,000,000. We will suppose however that upon an average since the creation the population of the globe has been only 600,000,000 - and that a generation lasts but forty years - that is suppose during every 40 years 600 millions die.

On this supposition there have lived on the earth previous to this time 90 thousand millions of men. We know not how many more will be born before the earth is burnt up. But we know that the millenium will last a thousand years and supposing this to commence immediately and that as many inhabitants will be on the earth then as now we shall have the whole number of men who will exist on the globe from first to last amounting to 110,000, millions- 110,000 millions of immortal souls my heavens! Can you form any conception of such a multitude? And yet hearer you and I shall see them all at the day of judgment.

In descending from man on the scale of animated beings we come first to the quadrupeds (Class Mammalia). And the number of species of these that are known to exist or to have existed on earth is about 600 (562 plus). Here let it be noted that we speak of so many different species or kinds of animals and not of the real number of individuals that inhabit the earth. Thus we say that the tiger and the elephant are different species: but we pretend not to say how many tigers or how many elephants inhabit the wilderness. They may amount to millions. And this same remark ought to be kept in mind as we proceed to other descriptions of Gods creatures.

And we come next to birds - the inhabitants of the air. Not less than three thousand different species of these have been described in the whole world - reaching from the tall ostrich which the Arabs sometimes employ instead of horses down to the wren or swallow. Nearly 300 species (278) have been described in the United States and probably as many as 1000 exist in N. America. And here would we repeat the remark just made that we are giving the number of the species of different animals and not the number of the individuals of those species. In this country we know little of the countless number of birds in some of the most prolific species - a respectable traveller in the South Sea Islands affirms that in an hour and an half there flew over him a flock of a single species of bird containing not less than 151 millions. What then must the number in the 3000 species that are known to exist!

The next class of animals in the scale of being forming a link between birds and fishes is the amphibian - that is animals subsisting in air or water. These include turtles and serpents and the species are less numerous than the birds amounting to not more than 400 (375 plus). Probably less than 100 of these species are found in the U. States.

We come now to the fish which as Moses informs us in the account of their creation, *the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind*. Of these not less than 1000 different species are known to exist, 3 or 4 hundred of which are found in the U. States and of the immense numbers contained in these species we can form some opinions when we are informed on good authority that the shoals of the single species called herring which annually migrate from the northern ocean cover a surface not less than 130,000 square miles and are so thick that vessels are sometimes obstructed and stopped in passing through

them. It is also stated by an eminent author that there are more animals in the milt of an individual of another species of fish than there are men upon the earth. That is more than 800,000,000. *O Lord how manifold are thy works! The earth is full of thy riches so also is this great and wide sea.*

The link we next meet as we descend along the chain of being towards inanimate matter is the insect tribe and these are very extensive. It is estimated that not less than 20,000 species exist. And how numerous particular species as you have all witnessed on many a summer evening when the air for miles around was filled with them. Among these insects there are not less than 1000 species of what we call butterflies (Papilio) and not less than 1500 of what we call millers (Phadena). You recollect too the many accounts in the Scriptures of the ravages of the locust. This insect constituted one of the plagues of Egypt and the Assyrians by Isaiah and Nahum are compared to locusts because they were so numerous and their march so desolating. These insects indeed in the eastern world are often so numerous as to hide the light of the sun for several hours and to render it night. Insects indeed are probably more numerous than any other of the creatures of God.

The next class of beings we shall proceed to notice is still lower in the scale of creation being intermediate between insects and plants. A part of these amounting to at least a thousand species (922 plus) are either inhabitants of the sea or of obscure situations and scarcely have names in common language. By naturalists they are called vermes. Another part of this class of animals is the various shells in the ocean and the seas and more than 2500 species of these have been named. Another part of these vermes amounting to about 700 species approach still nearer to plants than shells. Some of them are fixed to one spot like vegetables and yet have life and sensation and an animal organization. So that all the species of vermes known amounts to more than 4000 (4136).

The next link in the chain of creation carries us beyond the animal and introduces us into the vegetable kingdom. And it is a kingdom full of variety and beauty eminently displaying the wisdom of God. Previous to this time no less than 44,000 different plants have been discovered and described in the whole world. 6000 of these are mosses lichens funguses etc. which are also plants whose flowers and fruit are obscure. Of the remaining 38,000, seven thousand are found in Europe, 6000 in Asia, 3000 in Africa, 5000 in New Holland and 17,000 in America. And yet a man who is eminent for his knowledge of plants is of the opinion that not half of the species growing on the earth have yet been discovered and he supposes that there are not less than 100,000 in all. In the U. States between 4000 and 5000 species have already been described and the number that may be found growing wild in this immediate vicinity is somewhat above 1000.

Now in order to form some opinion of the immense number of individual plants in the 100,000 species to be found in the world take for example one of the kinds of grass growing in our fields and imagine if you can how many species of it grow upon a single acre - how many in this whole town - how many in the country and how many in the world!

The next class of objects in the creation of God is the minerals. In this term is included not merely the various ores of metals but also every rock and every sort of earth found in the globe. And here we would just remark that many will suppose that in minerals there is none or little order and very few marks of design and wisdom. But the truth is their regularity and construction when understood are truly astonishing; and although we cannot stop to elucidate this subject yet whoever will devote a little time and attention to it will find himself in a most wonderful field where new wonders will continually burst upon him and he will be surprised at the marks of the handy work of God in the most shapeless stone under his feet. And this same evidence of a creating God will meet him when he proceeds to examine

those apparently confused and irregular masses of rocks that form the loftiest mountains of our globe. The whole number of the species of mineral at present known and described is 230 - and the whole number of species and varieties nearly 600 (570 described).

We are now naturally led to consider the earth as a whole: and here we begin to contemplate those works of the Creator that eminently display his almighty power. And when we learn with certainty that this globe is nearly 8000 miles through it and 25000 around it, especially when we are told that it contains 266 thousand millions of solid cubic miles - the thought forcibly strikes us how immense must have been the power that first created it and still upholds it. This idea too receives additional force when we are told that this immense mass of the globe is carried forward in space at the rate of 65000 miles every hour. That is to say my hearers before we reach our habitations this day (which cannot be less than an hour) we shall be carried 66000 miles from the spot we are now in; and by tomorrow at this hour of the day we shall be removed 1,585,000 miles from the place we now occupy. Nay during every minute we live we are carried over a space of 1100 miles and during every second over a space not less than 16 miles.

These facts may amaze us: and we might add others alike astonishing in regard to the air we breathe which appears so light and harmless. This air during the most violent storms moves not less than 100 miles per hour and as you all know is most destructive in its ravages. And as to its weight it is a certain fact that every man of an ordinary size sustains a pressure of not less than 30,000 pounds, and the weight of the whole atmosphere amounts to five thousand 357 trillions 147 thousand millions of tons.

Yet my hearers when we look beyond this earth and contemplate the sun moon and planets and stars these facts in regard to the globe appear small. The magnitude of the earth diminishes to a point and its velocity in its course round the sun is comparatively slow. Large as the earth may seem to you, what think you when you are told that the planet Herschel is 90 times larger - that Saturn is 1000 times larger - Jupiter 1500 (1479) times larger and the sun 1,380,000 times larger? And yet these are facts that cannot be doubted admitting of mathematical proof.

Does the earth appear of great magnitude? Yet how small is it in comparison with the circle the moon describes round it - which is not less than 480,000 miles in diameter. And how small is this circle when compared with that the earth yearly describes round the sun which is more than 190,000,000 miles. And how small does even this immense circle appear when we are told that the orbit of Herschel is 1800,000,000 of miles in diameter. Nay this immense circle diminishes to a point when we learn that the nearest fixed star cannot be less than 38 billions of miles distant from us! That is to say a cannon ball moving at the rate of eight miles an hour would not reach the nearest fixed star in less than nine millions of years. And yet if your imaginations my hearers are not already stretched to this utmost extent you may be told that the most remote of the fixed stars visible are 497 times farther from us than the nearest!

Does the velocity of the earth appear almost incredible? it is not as already stated but 66,000 miles per hour: yet the planet Mercury moves 105,000 miles in the same time and the comet that appeared in the year 1680 when nearest the sun moved 880,000 miles every hour. But this is a slow motion when compared with the velocity of the particles of light. These come from the sun to the earth at a distance

of 95,000,000 of miles in eight minutes of time- that is they move 200,000 miles every second.

No doubt my hearers the vast number of species of animals and plants on the earth surprises you. But we are now speaking of suns and worlds - and here too do we find new matter of astonishment. Although not more than 2000 fixed stars are ever visible to us in the heavens yet when viewed with the most powerful telescopes so immensely do their numbers increase that we are authorized to say that there are not less than 75 millions in the universe - that is 75 millions of suns of which the fixed stars undoubtedly are and probably each of them is surrounded by several planets as is the sun whose light we enjoy - 75 millions do I say? So many are discernable by our imperfect glasses - but perhaps the creation contains 10,000 times this number: for *who can say how far the universe extends or where are the limits thereof! Where the Creator stayed his rapid wheels or where he fixed the golden compass?*

Here then my hearers do we rest. We have enumerated about 30,000 different species of animals and 44,000 species of vegetables that are known to exist on earth and we may safely conclude that double this number of animals and plants actually exist on the globe. We have also stated that there are not less than 75 millions of fixed stars. Now as every one of these stars is a sun which is very probable suppose that each one of them has as many as 20 planets and satellites revolving round it and this will make 1500 millions of worlds capable of being inhabited. Suppose each of these worlds to contain as many species of animals and plants as our earth and my hearers what an astonishing view have you of the power and wisdom and goodness of God! *O Lord how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all.*

We proceed to the second head of this discourse where we are to consider God's works of Providence. By the Providence of God we understand that watchful and gracious oversight which He exercises over all his creatures whereby they are supported in existence - favored with mercies and governed so wisely in all their actions that every thing is made conducive to God's ultimate glory and the best good of the universe. But there is not time on this occasion to take so extended a view of the subject. We confine our remarks therefore to those providential mercies we as a people have enjoyed the past year and for which we are called this day to make returns of grateful acknowledgement. And my brethren we may name among the first of these blessings a continuance to us of the offers of salvation. Though our sins have been innumerable they have not yet as we would hope cast us beyond the pale of mercy. The voice of God is yet calling us to heaven - the Saviour is yet interceding for us and the Spirit is yet striving with us. It is God in his merciful providence who has given to many of us a disposition the past year to unite from Sabbath in public worship in this house of prayer. It is He who has presented to us so much harmony of sentiment and feeling and suffered no root of bitterness to destroy the comforts of our religious privileges. And how great have been his temporal mercies the past year! Why have the fruits of the earth not been smitten with blasting and mildew? Why has not the former or the latter rain been withholden? O look upon your crowded storehouses and barns - upon the abundance the earth has poured forth from her lap the past year into your bosoms. Look upon these and on this day of Thanksgiving remember the poor and the needy. O remember the many millions that groan being burdened with ignorance - with sin and misery - and do not I beseech you use this world as abusing it - do not suffer the riches of the past year to be corrupted by an inordinate selfishness nor your gold and silver to be corrupted lest the rest of them be a witness against you and eat your flesh as it were fire.

It is the mercy of God too my hearers that has the past year defended us so remarkably from the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noon day. I see some among you indeed who are clothed in the garments of mourning and whose tears of sorrow for departed friends are mingled with your thanksgivings. But there are fewer of this description than usual. And it is fact well worthy of notice that for most of those called into eternity since the last annual Thanksgiving



remaining friends have reason for indulging a hope that they are blessed in heaven. While among those who are unprepared how few have been called! What astonishing mercy that such are spared!

In the third place we hasten to consider briefly God's works of grace. By these we mean the execution of that wonderful method of salvation for lost men God has devised by the blood and spirit of his only begotten Son. When man was created, *the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy*; and when this unheard of plan of salvation was developed those same holy beings raised the song of, *glory to God in the highest peace on earth and good will to men*. If the works of creation appear great and glorious no less so does the works of redemption - and even now there is joy in heaven over any repenting sinner. *The redemption of the soul is precious*, and probably nothing in the works of nature can so illustriously display to the angels in light the glory of their Father as this - nor need we wonder that into this they desire to look.

*Nature with open volume stands  
To spread her Makers praise abroad  
And every labor of his hands  
Shows something worthy of a God.*

*But in the grace that rescued man  
His brightest form of glory shines  
Here on the cross 'tis fairest drawn  
In precious blood and crimson lines.*

To create this material universe and the innumerable beings that inhabit it must have been the works of a Being almighty power infinite wisdom and endless love. But to now create an immortal soul dead in sin demands no less an exertion of power - no less of wisdom no less of love. We have endeavored to set before you the wonders of creation but the wonders of redeeming love and regenerating grace cannot be unfolded by a mortal tongue. Go to Gethsemane and the cross and the price there paid for the souls will show you the value of its redemption. Go into the caverns of eternal despair and the spirits of darkness in them weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth will tell you what it is to be unredeemed and unregenerated. Go into the New Jerusalem above and there witness the joys and listen to the songs of the redeemed through all eternity and then only can you know the wonder and glories of grace which redeems and regenerates a soul.

Yet this grace has been poured out upon thousands and millions in our lost world. And many very many are now tasting the blissful fruits of their salvation at the right hand of God in heaven. And my brethren have we not witnessed this past year do we not now witness in this place the operations of this grace upon some of our neighbors and nearest friends? Are there not some who one year since lived as if there were no heaven or hell no soul to save or lose but who now have a new song put into their mouths, even a song of redeeming love? Are there not some within the sound of my voice who feel, although they have lived many years, that this is the first annual Thanksgiving in which they have had one truly grateful feeling to God? O if they have indeed passed from spiritual death into life and become new creatures during the past year what abundant cause have they this day to, *serve the Lord with gladness - to come before his presence with singing - to enter his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise!* and to enquire with the Psalmist, *what shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us? We will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. We will pray our vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. O sing unto the Lord a new song: for his right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory.*

Such my brethren are the works of God: and with what emphasis may we say - *O Lord how manifold are they works. In wisdom hast thou made them all.* And how interesting the thought that in this place we have cause this day for devoted thanksgiving to God because we have had such opportunity the past year not only to witness his works of creation but to experience a kind and most beneficent Providence - not only to witness his providence but also his works of grace! What could God have done more for us that he has not done! If we should live to witness fifty succeeding thanksgivings probably we shall never in so many respects have occasion to recount so vast a variety of mercies from heaven and this is a peculiar Thanksgiving such an one as many of us have never witnessed and shall never witness again. Let it inspire within us peculiar gratitude - a peculiar sense of our unworthiness and a peculiar spirit of prayer and praise. *O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Blessed be the Lord forever more. Amen and amen.*

Delivered

At Conway Thanksgiving December 1821

## Sermon 96 Victory Over Death

[Sermon No. 96, "Victory Over Death," I Corinthians 15:55, 1822 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 2]

I Corinthians 15:55

*O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?*

*[See reference to Hartford Hymnal last page.]*

*What a glorious apostrophe* is this! What a triumphant conquest does it describe over the last enemy of man! Death has ever been represented as the Thing of Terrors and since the world began only two of our race have escaped the triumphs of his arm. Man has ever shrunk from a contest with him who is always conqueror and human ingenuity has been exhausted to erect some bulwark through which his arrows could not penetrate and behind which feeble man might repose in serenity. But there is no fortress so strong that he cannot penetrate it and no retreat so hidden that he can not lay it open and drag forth the miserable victims to the slaughter.

The grave too has ever had resting upon it a gloomy and a chilling darkness. Man turns from it with aversion and though often called to witness its jaws closing over his friends and neighbors yet you will perceive by his downcast look his startling tear and his heaving bosom that he dreads the hour when he must be cast into as a victim to its insatiable voracity.

But a new champion comes forth to contend with death and the grave. He takes upon him the breast plate of righteousness the helmet of salvation the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and advances to the conflict. Death and the grave eager for their prey rush forward and seize upon him whom they regard as their victim. And indeed for a moment he seems to be in their power wounded and subdued. But soon he rises with renovated strength and lo! a new spectacle! Death and the grave lie vanquished and he treads them beneath his feet. The dart dipped in mortal poison is broken by his shield and though they yet appear terrible their deadliest weapon is robbed of its sting. A spectator of the conflict seeing how complete is the triumph buckles on the armour of the conqueror and exultingly exclaims in defiance. *O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory!*

But this is no idle boasting. That conqueror of death and the grave was no other than the Lord Jesus Christ in that spectator no other than the apostle Paul - and to one who followed so closely in the steps of his Master death could have no terrors and the grave no alarm.

In this same language of triumph may be and often has been taken up by many devoted followers of the like precious faith who had on them the same invulnerable armour. They too have not boasted in vain: but in the trying hour have found the sting of death extracted and they have conquered the fear of the grave. Indeed it is the proper language of all who have the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

As remarked about the text is the language of triumph over the deadliest foes that ever scourged the fallen race of man. But it implies that to man unenlightened by revelation - and to those in Christian lands who do not embrace the Gospel there is a sting in death and a victory in the grave. Let us in the

first place enquire in what that sting and that victory consist.

And in respect to the victory the grave obtains of a man who has no hope in Christ a few words will suffice. When you see the bodies of friends neighbors and acquaintances laid on the sepulchre you cannot but realize that whatever of strength of health of vigor or activity they possessed, whatever of beauty and gracefulness in their form and movement all these have now yielded to the grave. Men may deposit their friends in splendid tombs and strive to embalm their bodies yet the grave mocks all their feeble efforts. He summons to his aid corruption in the worm and reigns sole conqueror in his dreary dominions over youth and beauty and strength and activity.

The grave too when unsubdued by faith in Christ swallows up the hopes of man. Philosophy indeed with her feeble taper has often wandered about her dark and fathomless caverns to discern some vista through which the light of another world might enter and give support to the victims who is compelled to plunge into those dark abodes. But at the best the light which faces on the eye of unassisted reason from another world is feeble and glimmering - and the man philosopher in view of eternity must always be found to exclaim

*The wide the unbounded prospect lies before me,  
But shadows clouds and darkness rest upon it.*

We now come to enquire what it is that constitutes the sting of death to the man who is not united by faith to the Saviour. And the Apostle in the verse following the text has answered thus enquiring: *The sting of death says he is sin and the strength of sin is the law.* This is a most satisfactory answer. The bodily pains which the hour of death brings could easily be borne - but to realize that we are sinners in that hour this is what poisons the dart of the great destroyer and gives a tenfold pang to the last agonies.

But sin itself would have comparatively little power were it not for the law of God. This gives it its strength. For says the apostle, *sin is not imputed when there is no law.* Though man had an unholy disposition yet if he knew not that God had prohibited its indulgence his conscience would not reproach him on a death bed. But all men do know that God has given a law that is exceeding broad against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. They know that so strict is this law that it demands a perfect obedience - a perfect conformity of our wills thoughts desires words and actions to the will of God and that for the least violation there goes forth from the councils of heaven a decree of eternal death. *The soul that sinneth it shall die. The wages of sin is death. Whosoever keepeth the whole law and yet offendeth in one point is guilty of all.* Now all men in a Christian land know all this and though they may not be much alarmed at their danger for years yet on the bed of death the scales fall from their eyes and they perceive that they have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And now the law thunders its terrors in their guilty consciences and adds an awful pang to the sting of death.

That great moral disease within us called sin is then what produces the deepest anguish of a dying hour. This is the sting of death. We shall get however a more distinct view of that state of feeling which constitutes the sting of a sinner's dying hour if we advert to those alarming views which then arise in awful distinctness before his mind. And the first thing in such an hour that awakens the most dreadful apprehensions in an unregenerate man's soul is the view of his past life. The general course of his thought feeling and action during his whole life passes in solemn yet distinct review before his mind and nothing is there discoverable which can afford him a gleam of satisfaction now that he is on the brink of eternity. He remembers perhaps many kind and amiable feelings he has had towards his fellow man and

many upright and honorable deeds he has performed: but these all resulted from worldly motives - and among them all he can discover not one which was founded on the love of God. The glory of God he now perceives never to have influenced him in a single instance - and this is the most cutting and alarming consideration that the Being who upheld him and who presented so many motives before him to win his love has not had any share in his affections and now he is about to go into his immediate presence when the only enquiry will be what have you done to the glory of God? not what moral and amiable deeds you have performed? He now perceives indeed that his whole life has been spent worse than in vain and that it would, *have been better for him never to know to have been born*. Such a view as this surely must plant daggers in a dying man's bosom.

A second consideration that is agonizing in such an hour results as a consequence from the view the sinner takes of his life. It is that his day of grace is now past. He has visited all the motives to serve and love God heaven earth and hell could furnish till the Spirit of God has departed and his heart is hardened so that created powers cannot subdue it. He remembers indeed the penitent thief on the cross - but he had not revisited so many calls and warnings and threatenings and promises as one who has lived in a Gospel land - and therefore he takes no hope from this extreme instance. He feels therefore that all is over with him - that as he has neglected God - God now justly neglects him and there is, *no place for repentance though he seeks it earnestly with tears*. Now does he realize the awful import of the apostolic declaration that, *if we sin willfully after that we have received a knowledge of the truth there remains no more sacrifice for sin but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation that shall devour the adversary*.

But the views of the dying sinners do not stop here. And a third circumstance that adds a poignancy to the terrors and anguish of death is that he is hastening to the judgment seat of Christ. Already in imagination he sees the earth giving up her dead - already does he see the books opened and therein trembling he perceives what an awful catalog stands recorded against himself - already does he feel his soul shrinking within him as the Lord Jesus his unyielding judge fastens his omniscient eye upon him and calls upon him before the universe to give an account of the deeds done in the body. And worse than all already does he seem to hear the voice of the Judge saying, *depart thou cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*. While the whirlwind of the Lord sweeping him away from hope and heaven. This is another constituent of the sting of death.

But the thoughts of the dying sinner are irresistibly carried beyond the judgment seat of Christ into the abodes of the damned. The picture of that awful world now presents itself in lively colours before his agonized imagination and although for so many years he has had no distinct perception of it yet now he finds it to be real and near. Only a few moments longer and his naked soul will pass the iron gate of hell and feel the gnawing worm fastening upon it and the unquenchable fire beginning its ravages. O dreadful to the dying sinner is the view he has of the lake burning with fire and brimstone of the spirits of darkness chained each one in his fiery bed and writing and groaning in the agonies of eternal despair - and then to realize that in a few moments he shall himself make one of their horrid society and that then year after year and unnumbered centuries after centuries will pass over his head not to bring him any nearer the termination of his sufferings but only to bring along with them new accessions of missed misery. O what a sting is there in such a dying thought as this!

These are the views and these are the feelings my hearers that constitute the sting of death. And although they may not be realized by every dying impenitent man in their full extent yet if there be not a lethargy or a delirium upon his soul in that hour they will be realized enough to harrow up within him a dreadful conflict of feelings. And is there any remedy for the sting of death - any shield that can turn

aside the poison dart? O yes my hearers death is conquered - blessed be God the grave is conquered. *Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* The Son of God has triumphed over these hitherto invincible foes. He has found the *thing of terrors* and come off victorious. He has entered the grave and found a passage through its dark caverns into heaven so that now the light of immortality shines along the path he trod to light all his faithful followers into the same happy world. In a word though all men must still submit to be cut down by the sword of death yet he has destroyed the sting of death in the first place by his atonement.

As before observed it is a sense of unpardonable sin that gives death its deadliest terrors. At such an hour man knows that he has broken the law of God and that therefore there has gone out against him from heaven a decree of eternal banishment and misery. That law cannot be broken with impunity nor can its penalty be annulled. How then with such a bar in the way between man and his God can there ever be reconciliation? The curse of a broken law lies with all its tremendous weight upon every son and daughter of Adam: but how wonderful is the plan! Christ has borne that curse for us and thus redeemed us from the curse of the law. The Father devoted his Son in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross to bear the awful penalty which the law demands from a world of sinners so that now he can be just while he justifies the returning penitent. Unless that atonement (sacrifice) had been made it would not have been possible for God to have extended pardon to an individual of the human race however deep his repentance and however thorough his reformation. For the law of God had been broken in sight of the universe and that law must be magnified and made honorable or the universe must have regarded even God as a changeable being. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ did magnify and make honorable that law. *For he is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.* The atonement then removed effectually this bar which lay in the way on the part of God and rendered it consistent with his attributes to pardon sinful man. It also removed another obstacle on the part of man. After the atonement was made and God could pardon man it still wanted something to excite in his alienated heart a love for God's character. And Christ by his redemption purchased the gift of the Spirit to be sent to operate upon the hearts of sinners and implant within them holy love. The terrors of God could not win the affections of a disbarred being: but the Spirit bids the anxious sinner look to Christ voluntarily bleeding on the cross and he cannot resist such a miracle of love. His heart which all the thunders of Omnipotence could not subdue is melted in view of a suffering Saviour and flows out in holy love toward all holy beings. Then are his sins forgiven and he is reconciled to God. And a sense of forgiven sin is the charm that can blunt the sting of death.

But in the second place Christ has rendered complete the victory over death and the grave by his resurrection from the dead. Could man ever have had an assurance that his sins were forgiven still there wanted something to satisfy him that his soul would not be lost in the dark valley of the shadow of death. Millions of men had been seen in every age entering that valley but no one had ever returned to prove that the soul was not destroyed in the boisterous passage. The Lord Jesus Christ was suspended on the cross and three long hours did he contend with the king of terrors while his anxious disciples longed to see him come down from it by a miracle, but at length he bowed his head and gave up the ghost and death seemed to have triumphed. The sepulchre received his remains and death and the grave and sin and hell exulted in their supposed victory. Three long and gloomy days did his disciples sorrow as those without hope. But at length the unwilling sepulchre gave up its charge and the Son of God came forth a conqueror over the tomb bearing on his forehead the inscription, *O death when etc.* The grave at the sight uttered a hollow murmur of despair through all her caverns that her victim had escaped death shrieking in anguish at his defeat and sin and hell shrieked affrighted from the spectacle. By his resurrection he evinced that death was not an eternal sleep and gave hereby an earnest that all who slept in him he would in like manner bring forth. Hereby he showed that he had the keys of death

and hell: *For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived that he might be the Lord both of the dead and the living. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.* Was indeed as the apostle says, *the first fruits of them that slept.* Every believer in him has therefore the promise Him who has conquered death and the grave that he also shall be secured up to immortal life and glory. *O death where etc.*

The subject we have this morning discussed my brethren is full of interest as we could gladly dwell upon it many an hour. But a few remarks must suffice. And first what a debt of gratitude we owe to the Saviour!

The Gospel is emphatically the revelation of life and immortality to man. Without this all is darkness and despair - with it light and peace and happiness are continually within our reach. Death once so terrific becomes now only the messenger to summon us to enter into glory. The grave once so dark and hopeless now becomes a passage from earth to heaven. And for all this we are indebted to the Saviour's blood and the Saviour's resurrection! Who is there that will not bless our Redeemer! Who they can refuse to love him? Who that is not ready to consecrate all his time and faculties to the advancement of his kingdom. Who that will not join the hosts of heaven in saying, *worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!*

In the second place how full of consolation is this subject to those who are called to bring Christian friends!

They have made their peace with God through the Saviour's blood. Their sins are forgiven - they are clothed with the armour of the Gospel and though they must have their bodies in the tomb for a season yet the sting of death is gone and the grave can hold them no longer than the resurrection morning. Some real Christians indeed as death approaches feel their hearts sink within them. But in the trying moment if they are really the children of God surely do they fail to feel the kind hand of their Saviour extracting the sting of death and softening their dying pillow. And their momentary fears serve only to enhance the happiness of heaven. They sleep in the same bed in the grave in which their Saviour slept and we may rest assured that He will tend their sleeping dust till the morning of the resurrection. To part with friends under such a belief in their preparation and destination O how different must be the feelings of survivors from those which are produced by the departure of one who has lived and died without God and without hope and who has felt in all its bitterness the sting of death! To those in this place therefore who have recently parted with Christian friends we may address the words of Paul - *I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

*So let us now mourn for those etc.* - Hartford Hymnal Hymn 380 [Source: *The Hartford Selection of Hymns, 1823*]

In the last place how dreadful will be the sting of death to those who have no Saviour! Such may live alone year after year regardless of eternity: but when disease and time shall have driven them to the verge of this world and just about to fling them into the gulf of eternity where then shall they turn for comfort? If they look backward a sinful life barren of every holy deed and a day of grace neglected and now gone forever will plant daggers in their bosoms. If they look forward they see a solemn judgment seat rising before them and a Saviour whom have slighted and insulted sitting on the tribunal and on the

left hand side of the tribunal that they see all the workers of iniquity with whom they must now take up their abode in everlasting burnings. O sinner this is the sting of death which you must feel unless you fly to a Saviour. Fly therefore O fly, fly – fly for your life.

Delivered

At Conway February 1822

At Conway February 1826

At Greenfield S. Parish August 1823

At Sudbury September 1826

At Amherst College July 1832

At Amherst West Parish April 1837



## Sermon 98 All Holy Beings Engaged to Save Sinners

[Sermon No. 98, "All Holy Beings Engaged to Save Sinners," Ezekiel 18:31, 1822 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 2

]

Ezekiel 18:31

*Why will ye die?*

It is a melancholy fact that man is bent upon his own destruction. Though endowed with immortal faculties capable of expanding forever in holiness and happiness yet he carries within his bosom those perverse dispositions that innate power of corruption which drag down these faculties toward hell. We are of all of us by nature shut up under condemnation children of wrath and slaves to sin and Satan and although there is a way of escape pointed out to us our hearts are resolved to perish and unless the power of an Almighty God intervenes we inevitably rush into the jaws of eternal ruin. There is such a blindness of mind and hardness of heart within us – such a moral madness - such a headstrong tendency downwards that even when the internal Eternal and Almighty God condescends to say by himself that he has no pleasure in our death when he pledges his perfections that he is sincere - offering us salvation - we do not believe him but remain unmoved and unaffected by all his by all his invitations and stand out proof against all the threatenings which an almighty and avenging God can hold over our heads. For my hearers it is God who is speaking in the text. The God who made us – the God who secured this moment – the God without whose upholding arm every one of us should this moment drop into annihilation - the God who will finally judge us - this is the God who condescends to speak in the text. And to whom does he Speak?

Originally the words were directed to the Israelites - but they are addressed to every impenitent son and daughter of Adam. And what is the death of which she speaks? It is the everlasting destruction which the ungodly experience in hell. And if the case of the impenitent sinner be so awfully alarming as to draw forth an exhortation from Jehovah - if their hearts be so stupefied in sin and if the death which is coming upon them be so intolerable as to awaken the eternal God to stoop to expostulate with them, well may the ministers of the Gospel take up and repent and urge the affecting the earnest entreaty, *why will ye die?* Although without the accompanying influences of God's Spirit all our exhortations will only serve to harden the heart yet are we most solemnly commanded under pain of eternal damnation to lift up our voices like a trumpet to cry aloud and spare not to preach the word in season and out of season whether men hear or whether they will forbear and to save the wicked from his evil way by all the motives - by all the arguments the entreaties - the joys and the miseries - heaven earth and hell can furnish. And if after all men will die their blood is on their own heads and our hands are clean.

We propose then my hearers to urge the text upon the impenitent and to show that if they do die it will be their everlasting lamentation, *we have destroyed our selves.*

In the first place then if any of us perish it will not be because God does not desire our salvation.

My hearers shall any of us dare to charge God with insincerity in what he says to us in the scriptures? I

presume not. O listen then to his kind entreaties to sinners - to his tender condescending reasoning with them and to his solemn oaths that he is sincere in his dealings with them. *Turn ye unto me saith the Lord of Hosts and I will turn unto you.* When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed and doeth that which is lawful and right he shall save his soul alive. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite Spirit. The Lord is long suffering to us and not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Come now and let us reason together saith the Lord though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool. Can any say that God is not anxious that sinners should be saved? Hear him then again. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die saith the Lord God and not that he should return from his ways and live? As I live saith the Lord God I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways for why will ye die O house of Israel? Yet saith the house of Israel The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel the way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel are not my ways equal. Are not your ways unequal? Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed make you a new heart and a new Spirit: for why will ye die O house of Israel. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that no pleasure in the death of him that dieth saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves and live ye. If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed and keep all my statutes and do that which is lawful and right he shall surely live, he shall not die. All is transgressions that he hath committed they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Thus it is that God speaks to the impenitent. And does he speak insincerely? Does he not desire their salvation? If these were the words of man what a deep anxiety would they manifest for our salvation! No less anxiety do they indicate in the God who cannot lie - who cannot dissemble. This language may my impenitent brethren is indeed wonderful. It is enough to melt an heart of stone. And shall it fall without any effect upon your hearts? Can you resist the entreaties - the expostulations - the reasonings - the tenderness and earnestness of your heavenly Father? It is easy to imagine how you can remain unmoved by the arguments of your fellow men - but how - O how - how can you stand it out against infinite kindness and love?

In the second place if impenitent men die it will not be because Christ is not anxious for their salvation.

Would he who thought it not robbery to be equal with God have condescended to take upon him our nature and suffer and die for men if that had not been desirous for their salvation? Would he have borne our sins in his own body on the tree if he had been indifferent to our deliverance from sin. Did he not come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost? He came not to call the righteous but to sinners to repentance. We are told that God our Saviour will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He came not to judge the world but to save the world. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. In the last day that great day of the feast Jesus stood and cried saying if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. Whosoever drinketh of these waters that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Is there not a most earnest desire for the salvation of impenitent men manifested in such declarations? Yet this is not all. For when Christ ascended on high he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men - that is he sent down the Comforter to convince the world - that is all men of sin of righteousness and of judgment to come. And would this have been done by the Saviour if he had no desire for the salvation of sinners? Why should the Spirit be offered to man unless the Redeemer felt an earnest wish for their conversion.

But far farther still that glorious Saviour is gone to the right hand of the majesty on high continually to

intercede for sinners. How ardent must be that desire for their salvation which could lead him not only to die for them and grant them the offers of his Spirit the purchase of his agonies but also to be incessantly pleading with the Father for their forgiveness and conversion! If nothing were in the way of man's salvation but the want of disposition to save them in the Saviour not one of them would perish. Heaven would be full and hell would be cheated of its inhabitants.

And this willingness to save sinners who will be saved is in exercise every moment. Christ does not promise to save them tomorrow but to day - this hour - this moment. His arms are opened wide and he would fain embrace the vilest sinner would such an one come humble and penitent.

This willingness in the Saviour is accompanied by power to save. Verily I say unto you said he on earth the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the voice of Son of Man and they that hear shall live. All power is given unto me in heaven and earth - him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.

In the third place sinners will not die because the Holy Spirit is not desirous of saving them.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appealed unto all men. It shall come to pass in the last days saith God I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. And the promise of God is most peremptory and final that he will give the Holy Spirit to them that asks it. And would the Spirit have undertaken this condescending employment of stirring with the hearts of the wicked if he felt no peculiar anxiety for their salvation? Behold says Christ I stand at the door and knock - in what manner is this performed? Doubtless in part by his Spirit. And what astonishing patience and forbearance does that Spirit manifest in continuing to knock though men resist him and slight him year after year? Still do the Spirit and the bride say come and whosoever is athirst to come and whosoever will to come and take of the waters of life freely. When God invites men to accept of his salvation his proud heart replies that he cannot unless he would be moved by the Spirit. God in tender mercy replies - behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you - I will make known my words unto you. And new heart also will I give you and a new Spirit will I put within you and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Now can any man read such promises invitations and expostulations and yet believe that he remains impenitent because the Spirit is not ready to convert him! Be astonished at this O ye heavens and be horribly afraid. The unwillingness of God's Spirit to convert sinners offered as a reason for their remaining in a state of unregeneracy! Hast thou not poured this unto thyself in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God when he led thee by the way? Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you that he will not hear.

In the fourth place if sinners will die it will not be because holy angels are not desirous of their salvation.

Are they not all ministering Spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Did not angels lay hold of the hands of Lot and his wife and daughters to bring them out of devoted Sodom? Did not an angel of the Lord open the prison door to set at liberty the Apostles? Christ represents each believer in him to be under the care of an angel of God. Take heed says he that ye despise not one of the little ones: for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. Indeed there are various passages of Scripture which represent holy angels as taking a lively interest in the salvation of sinners. There is one passage direct to the point: *Likewise I say unto you says*

*Christ there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* Those holy beings will know how stupefying is the malady of sin and how overwhelming and awful will be its punishment. If one soul therefore is delivered from its dominion by repentance they feel that a grand conquest is made and that an intolerable loss of misery is taken from it and they will know because they feel it what a full tide of happiness will flow in upon that soul forever and ever. Angels therefore must feel an earnest desire not that one sinner only be saved from perdition but that all might escape to the Saviour - and equally great would be their joy over any returning penitent even to the last. O yes no doubt those benevolent holy beings are now hovering about this house and watching the motions and feelings of our hearts in the fond hope that they shall have an opportunity this day to convey to heaven the news that another soul is born of God and delivered from the thralldom of sin. Would to heaven their benevolent wish might not be frustrated.

In the fifth place if sinners die it will not be because Christians are not desirous of their salvation.

Impenitent man may not believe it yet the records of heaven will one day bear witness that all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious and drank into his spirit feel a most anxious desire for all their brethren who are living without God and without hope. And such persons real ministers of Christ who preach the truth in the love of it? Then in all the commentaries and feelings of Jeremiah does he feel constrained to cry out to the careless and insecure. Hear ye and give ear be not proud for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride. O that they were wise that they understood this that they would consider this latter end! Like Paul they can say in regard to the unregenerate - I say the truth in Christ - I lie not my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that my self were accursed from Christ for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh. Often do they weep between the porch and the altar and say Spare thy people O Lord and give not thine heritage to reproach. And often do they can exclaim with the apostle. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. Private Christians too partake of the same anxious desire for the salvation of their unrenewed friends. Frequent and ardent are their prayers that the Spirit of God might be poured out on all around them who must perish except they repent. Their closets testify and the records of heaven will hereafter testify to their strong crying and tears for the ungodly. And the consciences of very many of such can now testify to the faithful and affectionate warnings of their Christian friends. To hear of the conversion of souls is indeed one of the purest joys the believer finds in his weary pilgrimage through this wilderness: and when he actually sees friends and companions forsaking the low path leading down to hell and buckling on the armour of the Gospel preparing to fight the fight of faith and becoming their companions in their journey to the New Jerusalem. O this will cheer the most desponding believer and animate the most drowsy.

Indeed he has no claim to the name of disciple of Christ who does not feel and pray for his dying fellow men who are pushing with rapid strides to perdition. And if there be any soul in this place who does not pray for himself be it known to him that every day within this parish hundreds of prayers rise up to God in his behalf.

But if God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Ghost - if holy angels and holy men are earnestly desirous of the salvation of sinners if all these are actually uniting their efforts to prevent their destruction who is there in the universe to desire and attempt their ruin?

There is in the first place the hosts of hell. The prince of darkness with his legions have roamed through this fallen world ever since their temptation of Eve seeking whom they might devour. The apostle indeed calls Satan the God of this world and he describes the impenitent as his faithful subjects led captive by him at his will. And this foul cunning and malicious adversary throws all the bars in his power in the way of the sinners salvation. He tries to persuade him that he will not surely die. And alas how many there are who believe him!

In the second place an ungodly world helps sinners on to destruction. The friendship of the world we are told is enmity with God. God and Mammon cannot both be served. Now all men are by nature the friends of the world and until they resolve upon breaking league with it and come out from it and be separate that world is assuredly luring them on by its temptations and pleasures to the chambers of eternal death.

In the third place the sinners heart by nature is resolved upon destruction. The heart of the sons of men is full of evil - yea also madness is in their heart while they live and after that they go to the dead. This heart hates holiness and put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter - darkness for light and light for darkness - calls evil good and good evil. We are told that their understanding is darkened because of the blindness of their hearts. The natural heart indeed is the great obstacle that stands in the way of sin the sinners salvation. *For the natural man receive etc.*

And must be that the hosts of hell and the temptations of the world and our wicked hearts shall defeat the desires and the united efforts of God of Christ the Holy Spirit holy angels and holy men for recuing the impenitent from eternal death? What could God do more than he has done for our salvation? Nothing my hearers. Yes God has done all that was possible for him to do for our salvation - all that was possible I mean in a moral sense. For there are certain principles in God's government of his rational accountable creatures which are unchangeable and eternal and it is morally impossible for God to violate them or act contrary to them since if I may so speak his attributes are founded upon them and could not exist without them. What I mean then is that God has done all that was possible for him to do in consistency with these fundamental principles of his government and his nature for man's salvation. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Says God wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes brought it forth while grapes?

Christ too has done all that was possible for him to do consistently with these principles to check the sinner in his mad career to destruction. The Holy Spirit could do no more then He has done and is doing to prevent this. For although in a natural sense he has power to convert every son and daughter of Adam yet in a moral sense he cannot convert those who resist his influences as multitudes do beyond a certain degree. Holy angels also are doing all in their power to hold back sinners from hell. And although Christians might do more than they usually perform yet they have done and are doing much to prevent the same awful catastrophe the death of the sinner.

Why then O ye impenitent, why will ye die? You see that all that is holy in the universe is leagued together to save you - while all that is corrupt and abominable and deceitful is leagued for your ruin. Your deceitful hearts may persuade you that all is not done that could be done to keep you out of hell. You may spend your life in quarreling with the decrees of God - with the doctrine of election or of that special influence of the Spirit whereby one is taken and another left and you may flatter yourselves that herein you find some excuse for your neglect of religion. But depend upon it as God is true that all this is a mere delusion of sin and Satan. The truth is you are fighting your way to hell. You are obliged to struggle against the stream of God's mercy and love which is running strong toward heaven and would

fain carry you thither. You are compelled to make every step of your downward course through a Saviours blood. The Spirit of God too takes hold of your right hand and holy angels and Christian friends of your left hand try to hold you back. But you madly tear yourself away from them and bursting through every barrier infinite love and power could erect you rush upon your everlasting destruction.

Delivered

At Conway March 1822

At Plainfield October 1822

## Sermon 99 Sin an Infinite Evil

[Sermon No. 99, "Sin an Infinite Evil," Job 22:5, 1822 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 2]

Job 22:5

*Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?*

This is a charge made upon the afflicted Job by one of his professed comforters. By some commentators the passage is thus translated, *Is not thy evil great that is is not thine affliction a calamity because thine iniquities are infinite?* And the words will bear this meaning. Eliphaz had the impression from God's calamities that he must have been guilty not only of the ordinary sins from which good men are not exempted but of others also of a big crimson dye – and he goes on in the succeeding verses to enumerate some of them. Yet there seems to be an allusion in the passage to the magnitude of the evil of sin in its very nature. For if Job's sins had been ever so enormous if they had exceeded even those of Alexander or a Nero they could not properly be called infinite unless there be something in the very nature of sin that deserves this appellation.

Without stopping to elucidate the text any further I propose to set before you some facts that will exhibit the magnitude of the evil of sin. And the first fact exhibiting its enormity is its effects in the present world.

Can we form an adequate idea my hearers what a world this would have been had the serpent never entered the bowers of Paradise? O look at the first happy pair in their happy garden - feeling their affections supremely and constantly drawn towards God – without any unruly passion or any stupidity to mar their sweet communion with their heavenly Father - tasting continually the richest of his mercies – seeing everything around them peaceful and happy - and they with no wish unrealized and no desire unindulged - never knowing the pains of excess nor the distress of privation: but having a full tide of unmingled holy delight perpetually flowing upon their souls. Imagine now this whole world to be but one extended paradise and the innumerable millions that have descended from Adam and Eve to have lived as they lived in the days of their innocence and to have never known disease or pain or sorrow or death. O what a world would this have been!

But look now at a contrast – at the actual condition of The world. See the briars and the thistles yet without the sweat of man's brow starting up on the surface. See discord and envy revenge jealousy murder famine pestilence pain and death rushing forth a mighty phalanx from the lower world and leaving desolation and misery in their march. See views of blood flowing in every generation from a thousand battlefields - measure if you can the oceans of tears that are arising from the broken hearted and distressed. Count the dying groans that continually fill the world – and number the millions that that are moldering away in this vast Golgotha. O you will find the world full of disease full of blood full of tears full of groans and full of skeletons. And notwithstanding these distresses you will find a firm and obstinate rebellion against God and a contempt of his authority – a total neglect of his love and service and an universal violation of his commands. O it is a miserable - a confused - a distracted – a weeping – a bleeding and a dying world. And it is sin that has made it so. Sin then is a tremendous evil.

And it was merely the eating of an apple in opposition to God's will that brought this overwhelming tide of misery upon us. For *by one man sin entered into the world, etc.*

In the second place the evil of sin may be estimated from the fact that it is a violation of infinite obligations toward God. Or rather this fact shows that the evil of it cannot be estimated.

The nature of God we know is infinite. And the essence is we are told by an apostle is love. This love flows out in a continual stream upon all his creatures and is calculated to make them all perfectly happy. But the nature of God is also infinitely holy. And this perfect holiness renders him averse to all sin. Nay there is between God and sin an infinite and irreconcilable difference. Hence does he say to all his rational creatures, *O do not this abominable thing which I hate*. Whoever therefore sins in the face of such a tender and earnest entreaty certainly violates his obligations to God and those obligations are great beyond all calculation and therefore infinite. It must then be a dreadful evil that can cause any of the creatures of God to be guilty of such black ingratitude towards him even at the moment when his mercies are more than they can number.

But this ingratitude my hearers appears peculiarly aggravated in man. Or rather man has had a display of God's boundless love towards him which at present appears more glorious and wonderful than anything we know of which he has done for any other beings in the universe. The incarnation the sufferings the death the resurrection and intercession of his only begotten and clearly beloved Son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life. This is a manifestation of his love more grand and astonishing than ever before or since appeared to our world. One would suppose indeed that every human being need but look to the cross of Christ to have his heart melted into the tenderest gratitude towards the God and Saviour who could do so much to save sinners. This man therefore can do that abominable thing which God hates in the face of all this kindness and mercy surely it is no exaggeration to say that he violates infinite obligations. Yet there is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sineth not. O there is then in sin a malignity and a baseness and a stupefying which no words can express and no human faculties conceive.

In the third place the magnitude of the evil of sin appears from the fact that it is eternal opposition to the happiness of the universe.

Holiness is the only thing in the universe whose invariable tendency is to produce happiness. It is the invariable tendency of it when not obstructed to produce unmingled and perfect and eternal happiness among all rational beings. And hence too God has made holiness the foundation of all his plans for the happiness of the universe. Such a plan might be the result of infinite power and knowledge and wisdom: but unless it had holiness for its basis it could not make rational beings happy - God therefore has made holiness the great object of all his dispensations to his creatures. When he says to men, *be holy for I am holy*, he expresses the great end for which Christ died for which the Spirit is sent into the world for which his word was given and for which the whole system of all the means of grace which have ever existed in the world has been instituted.

Now in direct opposition to all this are the effects of sin. Its tendency - its inevitable tendency - its sole tendency is to produce misery - and when not checked to produce unmingled and extreme and everlasting misery. Hence Satan and his angels are supremely miserable not so much from any positive powers exerted by God to make so make them so: but from the necessary and inevitable effect of sin within them. Hence too wicked men on earth are miserable in proportion as they are free from restraints and sin is permitted to rain within them. Hence in hell they will be entirely and eternally



miserable because there sin will reign within them without restraint. Hence too Christians cannot be entirely happy in this world because sin has yet a place within them and counteracts the blessed effects of holiness.

Now this opposition between sin and the happiness of the universe is utterly unconquerable. There is no such thing as mixing them together. For wherever human sin exists holiness does not exist and happiness cannot live a moment where holiness is wanting. Men on earth have indeed often attempted to reconcile sin with holiness and endeavored to give both a place in their hearts. But they have always found that they could not serve two masters and they have found in the end that they have served sin entirely and what they have supposed to be holiness has turned out to be sin under a milder name.

And this opposition between sin and holiness and consequently between sin and happiness will exist forever. Never can they approximate to an union until their natures be changed - and we are assured in Scripture that there is no work nor device nor knowledge in the grave whither we are going and that he that is unjust will be unjust still and he that is filthy will be filthy still and he that is holy will be holy still. So that through all eternity there will be a ceaseless opposition between between heaven and hell. In the one sin and misery will reign supremely and tyrannically. In the other holiness and happiness will spread their golden sceptre over the blind inhabitants.

And now how dreadful must be that evil which first attempted to throw a bar in the way of the designs of Omnipotence to render all beings holy and happy - and which still maintains an obstinate resistance to infinite benevolence standing in the way of the advancement of the kingdom of peace and holiness and even pushing its ravages into those regions that are holy and happy - and which will through eternal ages stand out in grim and increasing opposition to all that is holy and all that is happy! O it is sin that has dug the pit of hell. It is sin that will build a wall of separation between it and heaven so thick and so firm so deep and so high that eternity will not see it demolished.

The last fact I shall mention to show the evil of sin is that it ruins the immortal soul.

The soul of man is so constituted that it is capable of loving God more and more through all eternity - and this will make it more and more happy through endless ages. It is capable of increasing without end in knowledge and holiness. The time will come in eternity when a single glorified human soul will be possessed of more knowledge than is now possessed by all the angels in heaven. Time will come in eternity when this same human soul will have enjoyed more happiness than all the angels of God have yet enjoyed. In view of such astonishing facts no wonder Christ should exclaim, *what shall a man give in exchange for his soul! What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*

Yet my hearers sin has a power to view such a soul as this - a soul of boundless capacities for knowledge love and happiness - a soul that will live forever. It has ruined many such a soul and it is daily ruining thousands more. Multitudes there are in every age and every land who are the servants of sin and who alas are urging on their infatuated way to destruction. In defiance of the warnings of the bible - in defiance of the tears entreaties and prayers of pious friends they persist in their mad course while sin is ruling in their hearts and making havoc of their souls - it chokes and strangles every noble feeling and general resolution and spreads silently a deadly mortification (gangrene) through all the faculties - until the immortal mind besotted and stupefied in all her powers has left a chaotic mass of ruins - unfitted for the enjoyments and employments of heaven and therefore prepared to be food for the undying worm and fuel for the unquenchable fires. In that world of outer darkness the soul indeed still lives to misery -

but it is a living death - it is an eternal death. Yet it not only lives not only lives but it increases in its capacity for misery and for the endurance of misery. Such a state may emphatically be called the ruin of an immortal soul. It is called in the scriptures everlasting destruction. Yet this is the work of sin - it is the natural the unavoidable effect of sin. What a dreadful murderer is this monster! What a loss of holiness - what a loss of knowledge - what a loss of happiness - what an accumulation of misery - and anguish and fiery despair does it produce! The loss of happiness holiness and knowledge is literally infinite and the suffering to be endured is literally infinite because the soul is infinite in duration! It is this view of the subject above all others my hearers that shows us the immeasurable evil of sin. Who could not with propriety say to the impenitent sinner, *Is not thy wickedness great and thine iniquities infinite?*

The inferences that urge themselves upon the mind in view of this subject my hearers must not all be neglected.

And first the facts that have been exhibited show that sin is an evil too great to be estimated or comprehended.

If we look at its effects in the present world remembering that it is the source of all the misery pain sickness and death among us - if it be a base violation of infinite obligations to God - if it be in eternal opposition to the happiness of the universe - and finally above any other consideration if it ruins the immortal soul - what limits my hearers can we set to an evil which produced such results? Certainly the effects of sin will be endless in duration and immeasurable in degree - not only because they oppose the designs and will of the infinite God but because the accumulation of misery which sin will produce in eternity will be great beyond all calculation.

But in the second place he cannot set any limits to the evil of sin then sin is an infinite evil.

The only way in which we prove any thing to be infinite is by showing that we cannot set any limits to it. This is all the proof we have of the infinity of God's nature. We cannot limit the power that could create this universe and therefore conclude it to be unlimited - that is infinite. But this is all the evidence we can obtain that God has Almighty Power. And if we cannot estimate or limit the evil of sin surely by the same kind of reasoning we may conclude that evil to be infinite.

In the third place if sin be an infinite evil we see the propriety of many most alarming declarations of scripture which to some appear irreconcilable with God's benevolence and parental character. If sin be such an evil it must appear immeasurably hateful in his sight - and carrying this idea in our minds we need not wonder at such declarations as these, *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men - our God is a consuming fire - it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God - I have trodden the wine press alone and of the people then was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger and trample them in my fury: and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart and the year of my redeemed is come. If I whet my glittering sword and my hand take hold on judgment I will render vengeance to mine enemies and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh. For a fire is kindled in my anger and shall burn unto the lowest hell. God is angry with the wicked every day. Behold the name of the Lord cometh from afar, burning with his anger and the burden thereof is heavy; his lips are full of indignation and his tongue as a devouring fire. Tophet is ordained of old; yea for the king it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood. The breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it.*

Such passages as these coming from a benevolent God would stagger us did we not bear in mind the immeasurable evil of sin and the consequent obviousness of it in the eye of infinite purity. When we remember that it is the abominable thing which he hates we regard these declarations as the just indignation of an holy God

Fourthly if sin be an infinite evil it demands an infinite atonement in some sense before it can be pardoned. Now could any being make satisfaction for an evil unless his nature were commensurate with that evil? What was the curse of a violation of God's law? Surely everlasting punishment. Now then could any being be made a curse for the offenders the merit of whose suffering was not in some sense equal to the curse? And what other being has a nature exalted enough to render his atonement thus efficacious except he who in the beginning was with God and who was God? Accordingly we find that this very word was made flesh and dwelt among us and finally bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Blessed be God that he did not spare his only begotten Son from the shafts of violated justice but gave him up to endure for us those agonies under which a mere man an angel or an archangel would have fainted.

Fifthly if sin be an infinite evil how just in God to punish it with everlasting misery!

We do not see how it be possible for any one who acknowledges sin to be an evil of this immeasurable magnitude to doubt a moment whether it deserves eternal torments. For it is a self evident maxim in judiciary transactions that a man should be punished in proportion to the mischief his crime has produced. That is he must as the Jewish law required render an eye for an eye and a tooth for tooth, etc. Now if a man who sins has caused a mischief that exceeds all limits surely he deserves a punishment that exceeds all limits and what is this but eternal misery?

Sixthly – if sin be an infinite evil how deep ought to be the penitence of Christians for it and their hatred of it!

There is not a just man on earth that doth good and sinneth not. Nay Christians are guilty of sinning every day and every hour of their lives. That is guilty of that whose evil no numbers nor words can express. O what ingratitude is this towards an holy God who has promised to believe the Holy Spirit! And can any one, who is renewed by divine grace, realize that such an evil exists within his heart without feeling towards it a constant and unconquerable disgust and hatred and groaning under the filthy and intolerable load and crying out in the bitterness of soul with the apostle, *O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death!*

Lastly - if sin be an infinite evil infinite is the folly of neglecting to washing in that fountain set open to wash in from sin and uncleanness. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin and the man who neglects his blood is permitting the deadliest poison the universe can furnish to rankle in his veins and to spread death – eternal death through his soul. He is nourishing in his bosom a monster that will soon bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. He is warming into life the worm that will never die and preparing fuel for the fire that never - never - never can be quenched.

Delivered

At Conway March 1822

At Amherst West Parish March 1824

At Amherst College March 1832

## Sermon 101 Convictions Not Followed by Conversion

[Sermon No. 101, "Convictions Not Followed by Conversion," Luke 17:32, 1822 Mar, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 3]

Luke 17:32

*Remember Lot's wife.*

*[The story of Lot's wife and its application to all sinners.]*

The history of the destruction of Sodom contains many important lessons of admonition to all who read it. For although none of us may ever be placed in the same circumstances as the inhabitants of that devoted city, yet sin is of the same nature in every age and country and there is a general resemblance or analogy between all its exhibitions its effects and its punishment.

Our Saviour has directed our attention in the text to one of the sufferers in that awful catastrophe whereby Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Let us see then what warnings may be derived from the case of Lot's wife.

The wickedness of Sodom had risen to such a height of enormity that the cry of it had gone up to heaven and called forth the judgment of God upon it. At the earnest intercession of Abraham however God promised not to destroy it if within its walls could be found ten righteous persons. But Lot was the only one who feared the Lord. And him God had propose not to destroy unto the wicked. Two angels were sent to warn him to us escape with his own family and the families of his sons in law. But to his sons in law he served as one that mocked. Lot too appears to have been thunderstruck at the intelligence and he lingered unwilling to abandon his kindred and possessions to ruin. *But while he lingered the men (that is the angels) laid hold upon his hand and upon the hand of his wife and upon the hand of his two daughters the Lord being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth and set him without the city. There they delivered to him a most strict and alarming message. Escape for thy life: look not behind thee neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains lest thou be consumed.* It might indeed have seemed a severe command to be compelled to flee from their native city leaving their possessions and children to destruction and not be permitted even to cast upon it one farewell look.

But God knew that their irresolute hearts could not without all the tender recollections that would rush upon their minds were they to gaze upon the devoted city. And the result showed that even as it was the temptation was too great for all of the party. The wife of Lot at first lingered while he and his daughters pressed forward feeling no doubt her heart drawn by a thousand ties toward Sodom and beginning to forget the opening and unquenchable command of God. Lot entered Zoar at the rising of the sun: *But, says the same great historian, his wife looking back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt.* The command of God not to turn her eyes toward Sodom was clear and peremptory and therefore its violation was followed by an immediate and awful punishment. It may be profitable to enquire more particularly in what the sin of the woman consisted. What was it that tempted her in the face of such a command to pause and turn her eyes towards the devoted city? And perhaps actually begin to return towards it? For many writers suppose that she not only looked towards Sodom but really set out on her return thither. And the words of Christ in the context rather favour such a supposition. He

is speaking of the approaching rule of Jerusalem and says, *In that day he which shall be upon the house top and his stuff in the house let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field let him likewise not return back.* In these cases we perceive Christ mentions an actual return either from the house top or the field. Yet he immediately adds a parallel case and a warning, *remember Lot's wife.*

It is of small importance however whether this woman merely looked round on Sodom or began to go towards it. For in either case she violated a plain and urgent command of Jehovah. What was it that tempted her to do such a deed?

Perhaps in the first place she was prompted by restless curiosity. The destruction which the angels announced was so awful and the warning she had of it so short that she might have excited within her an almost unconquerable desire to know the exact moment and the precise manner in which it was accomplished. The human heart has an almost irresistible propensity to witness any thing that is new. And a miracle especially so awful as a storm of fire and brimstone from heaven must have called into action this propensity in the highest degree. It would not indeed be wonderful if the curiosity should prevail even in this instance over such a solemn command. It has always been represented that it was a lawless curiosity to know their gratitude of the forbidden fruit that prompted the first woman of our race to pluck and eat it - and surely in the case of Lot's wife the curiosity must have been still more strongly excited. It might therefore have tempted her to the deed which was followed by such an awful destruction.

But it is difficult to suppose that mere curiosity was the only temptation that beset this woman. Other strong feelings must have been excited within her by so wonderful and dreadful a command as the angels delivered. And in the second place it might have been a spirit of unbelief that prompted her to violate the mandate of Jehovah. The angels who delivered the message appeared in the form of men and although they wrought a miracle in striking the Sodomites with blindness yet she might have thought this to be mere magic or delusion and perhaps these men had invented this mode to alarm Lot and his family. Besides although she knew Sodom to contain much wickedness yet probably she knew many persons there who were kind and neighborly and whom she regarded as not deserving so dreadful a calamity as a shower of fire and brimstone: for we must conclude that this woman was herself unreconciled to God and she would not therefore judge others very severely since this would be to condemn herself. Under the circumstances upon which she was doubtless meditating as she followed her husband toward Zoar, she probably found doubt arising in her mind about the reality of the threatened judgment. And the prohibition she was laid under not to look back would appear to her unreasonable and unnecessary and tend to increase her unbelief. For what could be the mischief of looking back for a moment to see whether God had fulfilled his sentence upon Sodom. Surely if he had they should have no wish to return thither but should be quickened in their escape. This command then appearing unreasonable might seem to her to be a crafty plan of these two men to conceal their real designs and to draw Lot and his family to a distance from the city where perhaps they intended to destroy them. These doubts rising in the mind of the woman led her perhaps at first to slacken her pace and follow her husband at a distance and thus did she place herself beyond his protection: for he could not look round to urge her forward. Separated from him therefore and indulging her doubts perhaps the great Adversary increased them and persuaded her to turn her eyes towards the devoted city. Alas! deluded woman! You are lost! The transforming power of an insulted God is upon you and you become in a moment a lasting monument of the righteous judgment of Jehovah! while your unfortunate husband hearing perhaps your dying shriek cannot even look back to behold your last agonies nor stretch forth his hand to your relief because he must obey God rather than men.

Yet in the third place it is not probable that curiosity or unbelief operated so powerfully upon the wife of Lot as did an unwillingness to abandon forever her possessions and friends who were left to be overwhelmed and destroyed in Sodom. When the angels took hold of her hand to hurry her departure from the city telling her that inevitable destruction awaited it and its inhabitants the fear of so immediate destruction overcame her love to all other objects and she did not resist the urgent importuning of the heavenly messengers. For the love of life is the most powerful of all loves and the fear of death will conquer every other feeling. But that fear as she went from the city would gradually subside and there would be room for other feelings to spring up in her bosom. She had left in the city dear friends and children and they must perish. Yet perhaps by returning thinking she could persuade them to follow her and escape. Why then might she not be permitted to make the attempt? She perhaps felt herself to deserve destruction as much as those children and friends. And hence she might conclude a merciful God would permit her to go and urge them to escape since he is no respecter of persons. Urged by these feelings and these considerations she might have presumed to turn here eyes and perhaps her steps towards the devoted city and thus violated the unalterable command of God and brought upon herself swift destruction.

But it is still more probable that this woman was led into the fatal temptation by an attachment to those possessions she had left in the city. When the fear of immediate death had in a measure subsided as she fled from the place for attachment to her property would return upon her with a powerful attraction. Why are we compelled would be her reasoning, why are we compelled by a just and merciful God to abandon everything to ruin even those things absolutely necessary to our support? We are now going forth we know not where with nothing to supply the wants of nature and we are in the utmost danger of perishing with famine. But we have left enough in Sodom to render us comfortable and independant. We could be contented to lose a part of our property: but it does not seem right to be compelled to abandon the whole. Besides were we to save our possessions we might be more useful in the land where we shall go. If we go forward we must almost inevitably perish and if in return we shall but die and perhaps God in compassion will withhold the fiery storm until we have collected and secured the most valuable of our possessions. I am therefore resolved to return and do my best.

Such probably were some of the temptations either singly or unitedly that overcame the resolution of Lot's wife and tempted her to violate a law of God whose finality was awful beyond description. There is something chilling and terrific in being converted in a moment from a rational being into a pillar of salt - and thus be made a standing monument of God's displeasure against sin to succeeding generations. For we are told by Josephus and even by much later historians that this pillar was standing in their days - between 2 and 3000 years after the event.

We now proceed to apply the case of this woman as an admonition to those who in a spiritual sense have begun to escape from Sodom. For by nature we all are in a world that lieth in wickedness in a world which lies under condemnation of eternal death from God and every individual of us originally formed one of those who are thus condemned and lost. Yet while we are in a natural state we are ignorant that such an awful catastrophe awaits us. God therefore in infinite compassion has sent us messengers to warn us of our danger and pointed out the path of escape. He has given the bible containing a clear description of our lost condition and is full of exhortations and motives to persuade us to come out of Sodom and not be consumed. He sends to us also his ministers and his merciful and afflicted providences to enforce the admonitions of the bible. But notwithstanding all these warnings we remain unalarmed and take not one step towards escaping. Nay to very many of us all these messages appear as did Lot to his sons in law like those that mocked. They seem to us to be delivering an idle tale - and we refuse altogether to listen to them.

But God does not leave all men thus to perish. He sends another messenger even the eternal Spirit to take some by the hand and as it were compel them to escape. He convinces them of sin of righteousness and of judgment to come. He opens the eyes of the impenitent and they clearly discern that there is a heaven and a hell and that they are going forward in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. They no longer doubt that God is preparing a strange punishment for the workers of iniquity and that he is preparing a storm of fire and brimstone for all who do not repent and become converted. Their imminent danger alarms them and they arouse and follow the Spirit who is leading them. At length he delivers to them the message of God in the most urgent terms. *Escape for thy life; look not behind thee neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed.* This alarming message meets the eye of the convicted sinner on almost every page of the scripture and for a time he presses on toward the mountain of hope - toward Mount Calvary not daring to look back upon the world which he has now abandoned. And some there are blessed be the grace of God who never look back upon the world till then arrows are thrown around the cross. But alas others like the wife of Lot begin at first to linger in their escape and look back with longing regret upon those temporal pleasures and possessions which they formally enjoyed and finally return to them in violation of the solemn command if any man, *draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* In other words those who are brought by God's Spirit under deep convictions of their sin and danger do often instead of escaping to the mountains tarry in the plain for a time and thence return to the Sodom from which they fled. And the very same temptations seem to beset such persons as proved the ruin of Lot's wife.

Sometimes an unlawful curiosity produces proves the ruin of the convicted sinner. He must stop before he has reached the mountain of hope and pry into the recent counsels of God. He will not proceed until he can determine whether he would be one of the elect. Or he will not advance till he can reconcile his absolute dependance upon God's grace with the liberty of his own actions - questions which are the strongest meat and not the milk of the Gospel and therefore not to be solved by the novice during a season of conviction.

But more frequently an anxious soul is tempted through unbelief to abandon seeking salvation and to return to mire again inside him. He has been trying long to reach the mountain of hope but in vain and he begins to suspect whether he has not been deluded to follow a phantom. He begins to suspect he can be religious without so much painful mortifying exertion. He suspects God not to require striving so difficult of feeble man and he is led to question the necessity of a change of heart. He enquires of himself whether this deep and distressing anxiety he has felt for his soul was not all the effect of fear. And my hearers there can be very little doubt that the conviction of such a man are chiefly the effect of the fear of hell. He has not probably had a deep sense of sin and his sinfulness. The man who is convinced of sin and righteousness as well as judgment to come whether he obtain a hope in God's mercy or not will find his belief of the reality of religion and the necessity of regeneration by the special influences of the Spirit, he will find this belief increasing every month and year he lives. Whereas he who is moved to flee from the Sodom of this world chiefly by that fiery stone which is coming upon it will when his fears begin to subside begin to be filled with his former unbelief - and no wonder that such an one should in defiance of God at length go back to the world and there be more active in rebellion against God than ever he was before. But O let him remember Lot's wife! Let him look at the pillar of salt that stands on the plain of Sodom and view his doom.

But the temptation which most usually most usually induces the anxious enquirer to return to his wallowing in the mire is a secret love for those worldly friendships hopes and possessions which religion requires him to abandon. When first his attention is aroused he views himself a candidate for perdition

he feels as if he were willing to resign friends wealth fame and even life if he can obtain an interest in Christ. But after having abandoned these for a few weeks or months he finds rising within him a secret harkening after them again. He begins to feel as if it were a hard requirement to forsake everything friend riches pleasures and home for Christ. He would willingly resign a great deal for religion but why must he give up every thing? Perhaps he has some companions who remain dead in sin and must he altogether abandon their former conversation? By continuing to frequent their society and conforming in part to their prejudice may he not by the means of doing them some good? And where is the harm of mixing in some of the harmless amusements of the world? In short he now resolves to make an effort to serve both God and Mammon- to indulge to a certain extent in worldly pleasures and yet not go so far as to prevent his obtaining religion. For the idea of losing his convictions and returning again to the world strikes him with dread. Satan takes care to keep up this fear within him until he has succeeded in inducing him to turn his face towards the world and thus grieved away God's Spirit and then he will know that this fear will never trouble him more.

And is it indeed true that the convicting sinner is in as much danger of looking back with longing desires and of beginning to return to it as was the wife of Lot in regard to Sodom? And will the consequences be as dreadful in the one case as the other? The convicted sinner is indeed if it be possible in a state still more dangerous than was the woman and the consequences of every looking back world will probably be more dreadful. What is it to become a pillar of salt in comparison with becoming a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction? What is it to become a monument of God's wrath on earth in comparison with becoming a monument of his eternal wrath in hell? The command of God to the awakened sinner is certainly as urgent and binding as it was upon the wife of Lot - and if he does even look towards the riches honors and pleasures of the world with a wish to return to them to the chase after them again if he feels unwilling to abandon them for Christ - there is every reason to fear that he is lost and that a judgment much more severe than that visited upon the wife of Lot will ultimately fall upon him and make him an eternal exhibition of God's justice to men and angels

And here we cannot help remarking how similar was the case of Lot in regard to his wife to the case of the Christian in regard to the convicted sinner. Lot knew that his wife lingered in her escape and what an anxious apprehension must have possessed his mind lest she should violate the command of God and be destroyed. But he could not stop to warn her or strengthen her resolution - nay he could not even look round upon her but must press on in distressing uncertainty. It might be he heard her dying shriek but he could afford no succour. So the Christian may see the convicted sinner beginning to linger in his course and he will feel a most earnest solicitude lest he is about grieving away the Spirit and returning to the world but he cannot do anything to prevent his destruction. Perhaps he may see such an one at last on his death bed mourning that it is over with him forever and already beginning the wailings of perdition - but he can do nothing to rescue him - the Spirit is gone and vain will be his tears and his prayers.

Another remark with which we close is this. We have every reason to fear that this subject shows us the cause why so many persons live careless and indifferent about their condition in eternity. Is it not because when under convictions for sin they violated the command of God and looked back with longing desires after the riches honors or pleasures of the world! There are very few perhaps none we believe in Christian lands who do not feel at some time of life the stirrings of God's Spirit. Now if these do stifle these convictions and resist the grace of God why should we not expect that the judgments of God would follow them and they be left to harden themselves for final ruin? If the violation of a command of God brought such a sudden and awful destruction upon the wife of Lot leaving her a dreadful warning to future times why should not those who resist the Spirit of God be left to hardness of



heart and blindness of mind, to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath and to stand forth as a warning to all those who are awakened, to escape for their lives neither to stay in all the plain nor to look behind them but to escape to the mountains lest they be consumed!

Delivered

At Conway March 1822

## Sermon 103 Delusions of Satan

[Sermon No. 103, "Delusions of Satan," Genesis 3:4, 1822 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 3]

Genesis 3:4

*And the serpent said unto the woman ye shall not surely die.*

These words are a part of the conversation which decided the fate of our world. The tempter had already insinuated himself deeply into the heart of Eve and was leading her captive at his will. Leaving therefore his cautious manner of address he boldly declared in opposition to the declaration of God that death would not follow the eating of the forbidden fruit. Already must she have been far gone from her original purity and holiness or such a bold and blasphemous declaration would have opened her eyes. Alas the poison of sin had even then stupefied her moral discernment and brought her to be an easy prey to the arch destroyer. The conquest was gained - holiness and happiness and Paradise were lost - the barriers between earth and hell were broken down - disease and death and sin with their ghastly train poured in upon our world like a flood - and at the watch word of their great Captain legions of evil spirits rushed from the chambers of hell spreading abroad on the face of the globe from the east to the west from the north to the south and occupying every convenient station for ambush and beguiling the miserable souls of those whom the serpent deluded. Alas! how dreadfully successful have been the arts of these apostate angels in every generation from the beginning until now! And that first temptation has borne a close resemblance to all that have followed it. In every effort of Satan there appears a wonderful combination of cunning and boldness. So that after he has by well planned stratagems thrown the miserable victim off his guard he pours in upon him feeble and unresisting a flood of the most wanton abuse of God and his laws urging him with motives to the commission of flagrant enormities. In every age after a certain preparation - after having thrown into the soul some poisonous stupefying drug - whereby conscience is laid asleep Satan always declares to *men ye shall not surely die*.

The fact that there is a mighty influence exerted by the Prince of darkness upon our alienated world is so clearly and repeatedly announced and men are so often guarded against it in the bible that it would seem nothing but the most infidel scepticism could doubt it. For I see no reason why there is not as much ground for denying the existence and the works of Christ as the existence and works of the Adversary - since the existence and works of both these are related in the same manner by the same witness. If we may suppose that the terms Satan Devil the Serpent etc. are merely personifications of the evil dispositions we have within us we have equal reason for supposing that the terms Christ Messiah Redeemer etc. are merely personifications of the virtuous dispositions within us. The fact is the scriptures unequivocally describe a real prince of darkness now working in the children of disobedience and as a roaming lion going about deciding whom he may devour. Against his poisonous influences we are repeatedly cautioned to be on our guard, *lest Satan should get an advantage of us*. It is the object of this discourse to point out some of his ambushes and stratagems for ruining souls that you may not be ignorant of his devices.

The Christian although professing to have renounced the hidden things of darkness is notwithstanding often exposed to the influences of Satan. And no doubt this adversary to the believers peace will

harness and torment him as much as he is permitted seeing he has abandoned his cause and cannot be tormented by him in another world. But it is not my intention at this time to point out any of his wiles that are exercised upon the believer. I wish to exhibit some of those modes by which he leads those who are impenitent captive at his will. That all unregenerate men are peculiarly under his influence cannot be doubted by one any who believe the scriptures. He is said to be now working in the children of disobedience: and who are these if they be not the children of unregeneracy? All men in that state are said by Paul to watch according to the Prince of the power of the air and are taken captive by him at his will. And in another place Satan is called the God of this world an expression evidently implying that the men of the world are his subjects.

If then men in a state of alienation from God are subject to an influence from Satan we may safely conclude that he will exert that influence most powerfully on those occasions and those subjects in which men are most likely to see their danger and abandon his cause - and in which his hand will be least liable to be discovered by the miserable victims. Does the sinner love the world Satan knows how to spread over it a brighter charm and to lessen the apparent magnitude of difficulties. Does a man love fame or pleasure? He knows how to sharpen his appetite for these objects and to conceal the danger of disappointment. Is a man brought by trials to reflection and does he begin to see his lost condition? The tempter is not wanting in artful devices to divert his attention from his head and fix it upon something that will cause forgetfulness of religion. But there are some peculiar points upon which the adversary is most successful which we wish to notice particularly. And we may remark in general terms that his deadliest efforts and hatred seem to be directed against the law of God. We see this sage bursting forth in the words of the text, *Thou shalt not surely die*. The unbending law of God was, *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*. But Satan abhorred so short a penalty and probably he ate of the forbidden fruit himself before he made such a declaration to the woman.

And it is no wonder that the Prince of darkness should feel a peculiar bitterness of malice and hatred towards the strictness and perfect holiness and goodness of the law of God. For its perfection in these respects had proved his own eternal ruin. It is the law of God that will be his chief tormentor forever and ever. He cannot therefore avoid feeling towards the law a peculiar aversion. And well he knows that if he can persuade men to form too close an estimate of its holiness and extent they will not be alarmed but rest easy under his dominion. He therefore in the first place endeavours to persuade the impenitent that sin is an evil of small magnitude.

Satan made light of the sins of eating the forbidden fruit. And he said unto the woman, *yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden ye shall not eat of it neither shall you touch it lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman ye shall not surely die*. How exactly does this language of the serpent agree with that which we often hear in the mouths of infidels on the same subject! They too despise the idea that the mere eating of an apple should have brought such miseries upon this whole world. We are told also by thousands in every age that sin is a limited evil and that to represent it as infinite and evil the least sin to deserve everlasting torments is exaggerated unscriptural and enthusiastic. If any reply as thousands do that they believe the least sin is an evil that cannot be measured and that for their least transgression they deserve eternal misery if they say they decline this because they feel it and feel it as strongly too as they do their own existence - the answer to such is that they are deluded and know not whereof they affirm. Now did not this disposition to represent sin a small evil begin in Paradise with the serpent? And does not every subsequent attempt of the like kind appear as if the same artful tempter were at the bottom of it. For so long as he can persuade men that sin is a small evil in the sight of God so long as he can even keep them in doubt on

the subject he well knows they will not be greatly alarmed at this danger nor make any effectual efforts to escape his pangs.

A second method by which Satan persuades men that they shall not surely die is by persuading them that they are much better naturally than the bible represents men and that God will not be over strict in punishing their transgressions.

It seems almost impossible to a man who is brought to see the deceitfulness and depravity of his heart, that any one can doubt that by nature he is a child of wrath and that in him there dwelleth no good thing. For the evidence of such corruption is impressed as and strongly upon his mind as the reality of the light of the sun. And if there be any who are disposed to consider the charge of such deep and entire depravity so unjust and untrue Christian is led to conclude that Satan must have blinded his eyes and closed his ears. Yet there are thousands who do really quarrel with the representation made of their corruption in the bible - and who feel that although they are sinners yet their sins are not very numerous nor aggravated. They conclude that the unsparing representation of sinners in the scriptures are by no means intended for them but for those extremely corrupt characters who are given over to such wickedness greedily: while they who live morally and regularly are by no means in a state of such awful corruption. And although the bible declares that God looked *down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and such after God. But he said that they had all gone astray - that there are none righteous no not one*: notwithstanding this unlimited declaration of man's corruption yet Satan so covers up the hearts of many that they have not the slightest conception they are so alienated from God and that their lives have been little else than a series of sins against him. We say Satan covers up their hearts for were men left to themselves in a Gospel land it would seem impossible they should remain long so ignorant of their hearts as to suppose themselves small sinners are that their sins were not aggravated. But this great adversary gives them low and inadequate conceptions of the law of God. He persuades them to believe that if they are moral and decent and honorable in their dealings with men they are not guilty of many violations of God's law although they pay no attention to the first and greatest of the commandments to love God supremely. And so long as he can hide from them then that total deficiency towards God - so long as he can keep them ignorant that God's law extends to secret thoughts desires and motives - so long is he here they will serve him faithfully.

The third delusion of Satan is to persuade men that they can enter heaven without a change of heart.

There are many men who will acknowledge that they have never experienced a regenerating change but notwithstanding have an idea that they shall enter heaven at death. We have endeavoured say they to live as well as was in our power we have always attended to the wants of the poor and needy - we have supported religious institutions - we have observed the Sabbath and no man living can say that we have not been upright and honest and plain hearted in our dealings and we cannot fear that an infinitely benevolent God will punish us for all this and cast us away with the wicked into hell. Many others are resting in such a view of religion as this though they do not openly declare this to be the ground up their hope. But how is it possible for any person to entertain a single moment such a delusive expectation unless his mind be blinded by the adversary. For he reads in the scriptures from the mouth of Christ himself that, *except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, and also that, *not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. Now how is it possible I say for a man who knows that he has never been regenerated to read such passages and yet hope he is going to heaven, how is this possible unless Satan be deluding him? In order to delude him he has only to keep him ignorant of the

extent of God's law and when this proclaims death to calm his fears by denying, *thou shalt not surely die*. God is a Being so much mercy and compassion that he can never cast into hell one who possesses so many good qualities. Hell is provided for the openly wicked but was never intended for the more moral and amiable – *thou shalt not surely die*.

A fourth delusion of Satan is to turn the attention of impenitent men from their own unregenerate hearts to the sins and faults of professed Christians.

It is astonishing how sagacious unrenewed men are in discovering whether professor of religion live agreeable to their covenant vows. They talk as if they demanded and expected of such a sinless obedience. A man of the world can sin greedily and yet meet with little censure from his impenitent brethren: but the sins of the professed Christian are regarded with a microscopic jealousy: as often their imperfections are magnified into sins.

I am not desirous that men should be less vigilant in spying out the iniquities of those of us who profess to be on the Lord's side. But there is one thing which impenitent men ought to know that in the sight of God they are bound just as strongly as the professors to perform every one of those duties which are incumbent on him. The commands of God are not binding upon one man while another is exempted: and it is no excuse for the nonperformance of one of the least of the commandments of God to say that we are unregenerate and do not profess religion: for God has commanded us to be converted and to profess his Son before for the world - and that too without delay.

Yet notwithstanding this alarming from the view of the subject many impenitent men can give no other reason for not attending to religion than that professors of Christ do not live according to their vows. They feel as if they should repent of their sins were professors more strict in their lives. But now they are led by the conduct of Christians to doubt the whether there is a reality in religion. And they do not feel any inclination to be converted if such is the effect of conversion since they live better with their present view than many do who can relate along experience. That impenitent men have such feelings and professors of religion such feelings cannot be doubted - but the mystery is how any man can feel as if the bad conduct of professing Christians afforded him any excuse for remaining impenitent when in fact this is a most powerful motive for him to embrace religion. For if the church of Christ is so corrupt and the members of it are so remiss in their discipline and if this man has so clear a view of the bad lives of individuals he ought to feel an ardent desire to profess religion that he may be the means of purifying the church. He ought to feel as if it were a solemn duty he owes to Christ. He is the very man to take up the business and if he does not come forward to the task he must account for his neglect to God. If he neglect this course and on this account neglect religion he is following not the dictates of reason but a temptation of Satan. The adversary hides from him the extent of the divine law and leads him to conclude that there are some commands binding upon professed Christians which are not binding upon him: whereas there is not one iota of the law from which he is liberated a moment any more than the professors.

A fifth delusion of Satan is to persuade men that they are not bound to submit to God and embrace Jesus Christ by faith until the grace of God compels them to it. The adversary thus argues with men and indeed by an audible voice as he did with the woman in Paradise but he throws in such reasonings into their minds. The Scriptures says he declare that, *salvation is wholly of grace though faith and trust not of yourselves: it is the gift of God* - and also that, *no man cometh unto Christ except the Father draw him*. It is evident then that no man will ever become religious unless God's Spirit be sent to take away his heart of stone and give him a new heart. Hence therefore no man is under obligation to love God and

embrace religion until he is moved to it by the grace of God. He has that native aversion to God which effectually prevents his loving religion unless the Spirit draw him - so that he is bound to wait patiently until that Spirit be given.

By such reasoning of the great adversary of souls many have been persuaded to sit down in moping stupidity waiting for the irresistible influences of the Spirit until they found themselves in hell lifting up their eyes being in torments. For whatever be a man's creed if he will read the bible he cannot but see that God commands him to repent and love him now and that there is no condition and annexed to these commands. God does not say, *make you a new heart and a new Spirit* provided I give you my Spirit - but *make you a new heart and a new Spirit*. It is not said, *God now, commandeth all men every where to repent*, provided his Spirit be given unto them - but, *God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent - except ye repent ye shall all perish*. God does indeed as we believe strive with all men by his Spirit but if he did not men would be under obligations to love him and repent immediately: for it is nothing but their own sinfulness that stands in the way - and this furnishes no excuse whatever. Whoever therefore can believe in the face of all the positive the repeated the unqualified the unconditional commands to love God and repent that are found in the bible whoever can believe that he is not bound to obey these commands unless God grant his Spirit must be in a very dangerous state and it is greatly to be feared is deluded by the adversary. Satan began his temptations upon our race by insinuating that the commands of God were unreasonable. How well calculated to excite the suspicion that God was a hard master was his sarcastic address to the woman, *yea hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* And so he would still persuade man that he demands an impossibility in requiring them to repent and love him without his Spirit. It is time indeed as we firmly believe that regeneration is alone the work of the Holy Spirit and that man never will obey the commands of God until that Spirit disposes them. But this fact does not lessen by one iota their obligation to repent and love God. To say that anyone is thereby released from his obligations is fatalism. It is following our own feeble reasonings instead of the word of God. It is joining the enemies of the doctrine of man's entire dependance on the grace of God. In short it is yielding to the sophistry of Satan instead of the declarations of God. So long as he can persuade them to believe that their depravity releases them from the obligation to love God until they have the Holy Spirit so long he knows that they are safe in his hands. Indeed until men do feel their immediate obligations to love God they never will love him. The moment they face these they will see their own inability and that moment they will be converted.

These are some of the delusions Satan practices upon men in those things in which they are least suspicious of him. We might swell the list of his delusions to a volume. But we have only time to exhort those who feel their case to be pointed out in any of the preceding cases to arouse from their stupidity and burst forth from their delusions. Long enough my friends have you have you been the willing subjects of the Prince of the power of the air. It is high time to cast off his shackles. It is high time to have your liberty. *Resist the devil and he will flee from you*. Take up arms against him - rebel against him - fight against him - a little longer delay and his chains will be wrested upon you too firmly to be severed and you will feel his iron yoke galling your neck forever.

Delivered

At Conway February 1822

At Amherst College March 1834

## Sermon 105 Morality Not Inconsistent with Entire Depravity

[Sermon No. 105, "Morality Not Inconsistent With Entire Depravity," Psalms 58:1-2, 1822 Apr, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 3]

Psalms 58:1-2

*Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?  
Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? Yea, in heart ye work wickedness.*

*[The sequence of the last 5-6 paragraphs is unclear.]*

No doctrine of revelation is more frequently misunderstood by those who do not believe it than that of man's depravity. And there is an unqualified and sweeping manner of describing it sometimes used that conveys very erroneous and exaggerated views concerning it and tends to prejudice men against it. For men cannot be made to believe that which is contradictory altogether to their everyday experience. Even the phrase total depravity which is often applied to man's native corruption has often been grossly misinterpreted. It has been said if man be totally depraved he is as bad as he can be. Even devils can be no worse. Now this is by no means the meaning of this phrase. There is a sense indeed in which depravity is total. It is total because it extends to all our faculties. It is total because it consists in an entire alienation from God. But it is not total in such a sense that it could be no greater. For the scriptures and observation do certainly declare devils to be worse than men and some men to be worse than others.

Again it is said if men are totally depraved then there is nothing in their natural character that is honorable or upright or kind or amiable but they exhibit one unalleviated picture of crime and corruption. And since this is contrary to facts this doctrine cannot be true.

But the truth is my hearers that this is a very wrong view of the subject. There are in the human heart many things that are innocent in themselves. Among these may be named the fear of suffering and the desire of happiness. There is surely nothing wrong in the wish all men possess to be free from pain and to possess perfect happiness. So on the other hand in these affections there is nothing holy. They become sinful or holy only through the motives by which they are governed - which may be love to God or hatred of Him.

It is contrary also to all experience to say that there are not in the human heart by nature some characteristics that in this world are amiable and praiseworthy. Among all the depravity that appears in young children who does not sometimes perceive a sweetness of disposition and a tenderness of affection that challenge our affections? Who can dispute and who would wish to dispute that there is much that is interesting and amiable in the tender affection of the parent for the child or of the child for the parent the husbands for the wife or the wife for the husband - the brother for the brother the sister for the sister or the friend for the friend? Instances are certainly numerous where the friendships that result from these affections have given rise to deeds the most generous and noble. Sacrifices of one friend for another have been witnessed not only of ease, wealth, and reputation but even of life as the apostle testifies - peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. A man also by his modesty

and diffidence may draw from us admiration and love and readily for this be praise worthy. He may also be eminently compassionate and may take a lively interest in alleviating the miseries of his fellow men and weep with them in affliction and rejoice with them in their joys. He may indeed spread around him so liberally his charities and bestow them with such a seeming disinterestedness that he may draw towards him the love of the poor and needy and the admiration of the world - and so high may he stand as a compassionate and kindhearted and benevolent man that the wretched are never turned away from his door without carrying his charities - and no object of public beneficence solicits his assistance in vain. He may carry with him a heart so tenderly alive to a cry of misery and so full of compassion and tenderness for his fellows that he finds a spontaneous effort within him to lend a helping hand to soften the wretchedness and increase the happiness of society. He may possess a high minded generosity that puts his name always among the first in the amount of his benevolent acts. And so firmly have taken possession of his soul that he scorns whatever is mean or vicious or intriguing and exhibits an unyielding and independant course of conduct in his dealings with men. So that his word is sacred and his faith is confided in as sincerely as if he were bound by ever so many written contracts - and so far may he be from duplicity and overreaching that in a bargain he does precisely *to others as he would they should do unto him*. In short so strong and fixed may be the sense of doing that which is right that it operates uniformly upon his conduct and settles down into a constant principle of action - and he is regarded by all around him as indeed he may be a compassionate, tender- hearted, charitable, upright, honorable, generous, honest and strictly conscientious man - in whom so far as this world is concerned all confidence may be placed. And for these qualities he may obtain as he deserves the respect and love of society and contribute by his exertions to spread peace and comfort and civilization and good order over the face of society.

All this may a man be - all this have many been - all this was the ruler in the Gospel whom Christ loved - all this were many in Pagan Greece and Rome - all this may a man be who nevertheless carries in his heart the essence - the root of that universal depravity from which the scripture declares not one is exempt - no not one. We do not deny to the unrenewed man all the interesting qualities that have been enumerated - neither do the scriptures deny him these. What then is the element - the essence of that depravity which holy men of old speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost charge upon us with such emphasis and solemnity. *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men* - for what? Not to see whether there were any who were kind neighbors - faithful friends - compassionate, upright, and charitable men - but to *see if there are any that did understand and seek God*. And did he find any such? *They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth with God no, not one*. Although there were many who were amiable and honourable in the things of this world *there was none righteous no not one*. Here then we see in what their depravity chiefly consisted - viz. in neglecting to love and to serve God - in neglecting the first and the greatest commandment. And this is the charge that is made upon every son and daughter of Adam: for the scriptures say the Lord looked down upon the children of men - not upon a part of them - and this neglect to love obey and worship God - this denies the creature more than the Creator - this is the essence of depravity - this it is that makes us children of wrath - this is it that causes God to be angry with us every day. We may take up this charge which the scripture makes and carry it now to the whole human family and alas it will be found awfully true. Among all that is kind and benevolent and amiable and generous and noble in this world how common is it to find that the God who gave all these fine affections and faculties and continues them in play is forgotten and his first and chief commandment neglected. Yes this is a view of the subject which unrenewed men rarely take. It is one of the most difficult lessons men ever learn to be convinced that if they fulfill their duties toward their fellow men never so exactly and conscientiously this is no proof that they are religious if they do not love God supremely. And thousands there are who go into eternity expecting to enter heaven because they have been so kind and charitable and upright



towards men although they have not complied with the greatest commandment to give their affection supremely to God who have not lived in the habit of prayer and repentance and actively striving to promote God's glory - and who therefore are no more fit for heaven than the most abandoned outlaw on earth - since both are wanting in that only thing that can render heaven a happy place viz. love to God. But it is next to impossible to convince moral and amiable men of this grand distinction between worldly morality and love to God. There is on the subject a deep slumber resting upon the men of the world so deep that the Spirit of God only can break it. Yet we should never neglect making the effort in the humble hope that God's Spirit may render effectual our words.

It appears from the text that the same mixing together of worldly morality and holiness was common in the days of David. It seems men asserted themselves to be righteous merely because of their external actions without a regard to the motives by which they here moved. And never was there a keener specimen of sarcasm than the question put in the text - for they certainly are sarcastic although this is a very uncommon mode of speech in the Bible. *Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? Do ye judge uprightly O ye sons of men?* That is do your professions of kindness and humility and honesty and sincerity and exalted benevolence and generosity and candor and charity do these things indeed prove you to declare righteousness? Do ye judge uprightly ye sons of men in regard to the nature of God's law and character and of holiness and of heaven? Do ye indeed judge uprightly from right motives in regard to your fellow men? *Yea in heart ye work wickedness.* Your motives are not right in the sight of God. The love of God does not lie at the bottom of all your works and your judgments and therefore in your hearts you are devising wickedness. For God regards the motives of men: he looks on the heart and if a regard to his glory be not the governing principle of your conduct whatever may be your professions you are in fact working wickedness. Your outward conduct cannot recommend you in the least to God unless your hearts be right with him.

It is by some suspected that David referred in this passage to Sarah and other of his enemies who might have professed to try him in a legal manner. And yet he seems to have a more extensive meaning since he speaks of the sons of men an expression which normally denotes all mankind. And he seems here to be describing the wickedness of the natural heart: for he proceeds to say *the wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born spreading lies.* But whether the Psalmist had so extensive a meaning certainly the world will apply thus externally and they contain an admirable sarcasm upon the supposed righteousness of those who although moral and amiable do not love God.

Let us apply them for instance to the man of delicate sensibility and compassion for the distressed: but who neglects God. And does such an one indeed speak righteousness and judge uprightly? Certainly it is right to enter with a lively interest into the distresses of our brethren. But alas many a man who has felt his soul poured out within him like water at the spectacle of distress in man has never yet felt on one emotion of compassion or tenderness at the spectacle of a bleeding Saviour. His sensibility may never have been awakened within him when contemplating, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.* The joys of heaven and the pains of hell - the glorious character of God and the interesting relations and we bear to him. These most sublime and interesting subjects may not awaken within his heart a single emotion of love or gratitude or penitence! And yet this man is admired among men as a pattern of tender and compassionate feelings. But how does he appear in the sight of his God? totally insensible as he is towards the purest holiest and most interesting objects in the universe. We do not say that his sensibility and compassion are of no avail. They avail much in this world - and they have too their rewards. But limited as they are to this world they do not prove anything like righteousness in his soul. *Yea in his heart he works wickedness.* For the God who gave him all these fine and tender feelings and who requires of him that he devote them to religion -

that God is forgotten - and treated with cold neglect. What a meeting then will there be between the man and his God in judgment!

But suppose these sensibilities and this compassion for the miserable have led this man to pour forth his liberal charities upon all the poor and deserving around him and made many and great sacrifices to the public good and all this apparently from a sincere desire for others happiness - will not these noble acts be of some avail to recommend this man to God in the judgment? If in performing these deeds he has acted from a regard to the will of God - if he has loved and served God at the same time - certainly these actions will avail much. But if he has neglected God in all this let the apostle answer the question - *Though I bestow all my goods to find the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity it profiteth me nothing.* And you all know my hearers that by charity in this passage the apostle means supreme love and devotion to God as well as to man.

Let us apply the text to another description of merely moral man. Take the man who in all his dealings with his fellows aims at the most perfect righteousness - who scorns to overreach his neighbor in the least - who regard his verbal promise as binding as a written contract and who conscientiously endeavors in all his worldly dealings to do unto others as he would they should do unto him. Now cannot such a man in the day of judgment look all the men in the face without trembling knowing that all of them are ready to bear witness to his honesty and integrity and will he have any thing of fear from a just God? Alas the justice of God is that from which he has every thing to fear. Nothing would be more awful than that God should do him strict justice. Nay if God should do him strict justice - Nay if God should treat him as he has treated God his case would be hopeless. For he has neglected the first great commandment all his days without feeling any compunction. While he was so very exact in sending to everyone their dues and so strict in balancing the accounts between himself and his neighbors - he was neglected that much longer and more important account between his soul and his God. To God he owed himself. And yet he has never taken one step towards adjusting that account although God has all along invited and urged him to it. He has been guilty of the blackest injustice towards God. He has been robbing God of what was his due viz. his heart and affections. And now if God executes justice upon him he will deliver him to the Judge and the Judge to the officer and he will be cast into prison and come not out till he has paid the uttermost farthing.

In like manner we might apply the text to every other description of merely moral men who neglect the love and service of God and Christ and show that notwithstanding their smart and elevated morality they do in their hearts work wickedness because their apparent good deeds are from defective and rotten motives and in them all God is neglected. But no doubt there are many who find themselves in the possession and practice of such an elevated morality as has been described and who imagine this to be an evidence that they do love God: since they cannot conceive how such kind and compassionate and benevolent and conscientious feelings should spring from anything else. No doubt this most delusive notion has sent many a deluded man to perdition. Let the following illustrations show how groundless is the supposition.

Let it be imagined that the whole world were under the dominion of a just and benignant Prince who had enacted a most powerful and equitable and reasonable system of laws reaching to all the conduct of his subjects. Suppose now that the inhabitants of a certain island revolt against this prince and cast off every one of his laws. In the course of time these rebels would find it necessary to establish by mutual consent some laws of their own. They could not exist as a society unless it were regarded as necessary to be kind and compassionate and charitable to one another - upright and honest in their dealings - and honorable and open-hearted and benevolent in their conduct. And there would very soon

be established in such a society a certain standard of morality and those who lives the nearest this standard would be regarded as the most worthy among them and be most honored and beloved - while he who neglected the standards would be despised and punished. In short there would be among these rebels the worthy and the unworthy - the moral and the immoral. - virtuous and the corrupt - just as strongly marked as among the subjects of the Prince from whom they have revolted. But the standard of their morality would differ in one important respect from that which exists among the subjects of this Prince although in most things they might coincide. These rebels would regard it perfectly justifiable to maintain their rebellion against their former Prince; and that man would be most celebrated for his virtues among them who would be most forward and zealous and daring in defense of their rebellion. Whereas at the court of the Prince their rebellion would be regarded as an act which rendered them deserving of the severest punishment.

Suppose still farther that this Prince should neglect for many years to subdue these rebels - even until the generation that originally broke loose from his authority were all passed away and the children had taken their place. It is easy to conceive how far this revolted society might have advanced in civilization and morality. And as their former Prince had not for many years molested them they might perhaps have almost forgotten that he was their enemy. But in the court of that Prince they would still be regarded as rebels and let him only renew his demand upon them to submit to his laws and authority and all their enmity would be awakened and stir them up to the most determined and obstinate resistance.

Now my hearers how exactly does this representation suit the case of the rebellious and alienated world. We see much that is kind and compassionate and upright and honorable and noble and benevolent on the face of society - and there is a very wide difference between the man who exhibits these interesting and praiseworthy traits of character and the man who exhibits the opposite of all these. But at the same time how very possible is it that in the court of heaven we may every one of us be regarded as revolted from God and therefore deserving the blackness of darkness forever! The man in whose character all worldly virtues are conspicuous may nevertheless be totally regardless of God - and live without communion with him or any abiding sense of his presence. And although until God urge him by his Spirit to cast away the weapons of rebellion and to submit to his laws and authority he may feel no peculiar opposition to his character yet until a great moral renovation be wrought upon him is he in fact destitute of that only thing which can qualify him for the society of heaven. He does not love and serve God. Alas how many there are of this character! How many there are who win our love by their amiable and upright conduct but who give no evidence that they love God! How many who seem determined to make no distinction between worldly morality and love to God!

The subject we have at this time discussed shows us the reason why the profligate and openly corrupt man is often convicted and converted while many amiable and moral man remains unaffected. If an abandoned man can once be made to turn his eyes upon his heart for a moment he sees his iniquity and he is alarmed at the awful prospect. Thus cut off at once from all hope from within he is led forth with to look to Christ and to seize upon his cross and save him from sinking into the abyss of hell. But not so the man of many moralities. His heart although not entirely free from sin appears to him not very bad - and long will he build upon self righteousness and feel unwilling to believe that he is a candidate for perdition. And thus will he go on month after month and perhaps year after year trusting to that which will not stand him one moment in the day of judgment.

In the second place we learn from this subject what is the first question that will be put to us at the day of judgment. It will be have you observed the first commandment? to love the Lord your God with all

your heart and mind and strength? The moral man may reply that he was honest and upright and compassionate and benevolent in all his dealings on earth and he always revered religious institutions. But the judge will admit no such replies as these for a man might have done all this and yet have been an enemy of God. The Judge therefore will repeat the enquiry – have you loved and served God? And if we cannot answer this question in the affirmative He will never enquire whether we have kept the second commandment. Our eternal destiny will turn upon the point whether we have loved God. This consideration ought to make those of us who mix together worldly morality and love to God tremble. It will be an awful disappointment to go to the judgment seat of Christ loaded with the applause of an admiring world for our amiable qualities and exalted deeds of morality and yet hear the Judge declare – I know you not whence ye are – depart from me ye worker of iniquity.

Delivered

At Conway April 1822

At Ashfield December 1822

## Sermon 106 Universal Obedience Necessary

[Sermon No. 106, "Universal Obedience Necessary," I John 2:3, 1822 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 3]

I John 2:3

*And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

The question, *Am I a Christian?*, is the most important that can be proposed to the human mind. It is no wonder that he who realizes the infinite consequences depending upon it should come to the examination of it with a trembling and awful solicitude. The man who is given up to the control of his ungodly lusts and is by them reduced to such a hardness of heart and blindness of mind as to disbelieve or be insensible to the day of judgment may indeed treat this question with a contemptuous indifference. So the man of the world who is too much occupied with its pursuits to spend time for its examination may put it off to a more convenient season. But the sober engineer after enquirer after truth the man who has a just sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life and who believes there is a judgment to follow death and that every man will be rewarded according to his works such an one cannot sit down to sum up the evidences of a Christian character without a deep solemnity and an anxious intent in the application of it to himself. It is not as the world too often imagine the mark of weakness and cowardice to be concerned for our souls if we find any reason for supposing ourselves to be destitute of a Christian character. It is on the contrary an evidence that our minds are beginning to break the shackles of sin and to act according to their true dignity when we feel within us a deep anxiety. The world may indeed ridicule such feelings: but of what consequence is this if God and holy angels and pious men regard them as marks of the truest wisdom! To feel indifferent whether we bear about us the marks of true piety is indeed to scorn immortality. When God has threatened us with everlasting destruction unless our characters be changed it is not a mark of courage to treat his threatenings with unconcern: but it is an evidence of foolhardiness - of a beastly stupidity - of a real madness.

And can the important question whether we be really children of God be satisfactorily decided? Certainly it can or the apostle had never said, *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you except by reprobates?* Nor would John have said, *we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren* - nor could he have uttered with propriety the text - *hereby do we know that we know him if he keep his commandments.*

It is not my intention however at this time to set before you the numerous evidences of regeneration the scriptures and experience furnish. A particular part of this evidence will occupy our attention. The following proposition seems to be contained in the text that and unreserved and universal obedience to the commands of Christ is necessary to prove that we are believers in him to the saving of our souls. That is to say no other evidence can prove us to have been born again if it be not accompanied by this entire obedience.

The first proof of this proposition is the express declaration of scripture.

The text certainly conveys this idea - *hereby do we know that we know him if we keep his commandments*. And the succeeding verse yet plainer - *He that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. If ye love me says Christ keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them he it is that loveth me. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. If ye love me keep my commandments. Not every one that saith unto me Lord Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in heaven. Ye shall know them by their fruits. And every one that beareth 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.* Says Paul. *This is a faithful saying and many things I will that thou affirm constantly that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men.* Says James - *Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving your own selves. What does it profit my brother though a man say he have faith and have not works? Can faith save him? Wilt thou know O vain men that faith without works is dead? Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only. Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

These texts of scripture manifestly teach these two things - first without obedience to the commands of Christ all other evidences of our intent in him are of no value - and secondly that this obedience must be unreserved and universal. By this phrase I do not mean a sinless obedience: for this is not possible and there never yet has been on earth a just man except Christ that did good and sinned not. I mean merely an obedience that aims to be universal - that does not indulge habitually in any course of conduct or in the omission of any duty that is known to be contrary to God's will. It is not an obedience that reserves the right of keeping the weightier matters of the law and of neglecting the smaller: but which feels an obligation to comply with every one of the commandments and actually endeavors to comply with them and which does comply with every one of them though infrequently. Without such an obedience no man has a right to expect he shall know that he has an interest in Christ.

The second argument proving the position that universal and unreserved obedience is necessary to prove that we are regenerate is that every other evidence of piety has its counterfeits - that is to say there have been those in every age who for a time seemed and really believed themselves to possess every other evidence of their interest in Christ except good works who have nevertheless found at last that they had neither part nor lot in the matter.

One good evidence of a change of heart is deep convictions of sin. A person perhaps is brought most deeply to feel how exceeding sinful how vilely ungrateful he has been in the sight of God. He has an overpowering sense of the vileness of sin before an holy God. He is astonished how forbearance of God could have been exercised towards him so long. He feels that he richly deserves everlasting torments for his sins and unless the sovereign mercy of God be exercised towards him he knows that everlasting torment will be his portion. He is brought as he imagines to throw himself upon the mercy of God in Christ and receives comfort and has a sense of forgiven sin. And when he looks back upon his exercises he is led from scripture and the conversation of his brethren to regard his deep and pungent convictions as a good mark in favour of his having experienced a change of heart. And indeed such convictions as I have described are very favourable evidence: for they are the feelings every real Christian has within him and it is not very often that a man is deceived by them. Yet the difficulty is they are in some instances wholly delusive. Instances are not infrequent in which men with just such convictions as they really supposed do after a time apostatize and thus prove that they are wholly deceived. So that convictions however favourable in appearance are not sufficient to rest our hope upon unless they be succeeded by a disposition to keep the commandments.

Another evidence on which men are apt to rely as proof of regeneration is the remarkable and sudden change they recollect to have passed in their feelings. After experiencing for a time such convictions as have been supposed above they find at once their distress suddenly to leave them and tranquility and peace to succeed and perhaps also a remarkable degree of joy. Now they find their views of God's character to be radically altered and Christ seems to them the chief among ten thousands and the one altogether lovely. The scriptures appear a new book. Passages are plain to them now that formerly were unintelligible. Every thing around them in the nature and providence assumes a different aspect. God seems to be in every thing and his presence is no longer painful. Christians appear the the excellence of the earth and their affections are drawn out towards them so far as they are like Christ. In fine they can appropriate to themselves the declaration of Paul that, *if any man be in Christ he is a new creature old things are passed away behold all things are become new.*

Now such a change in the convicted sinner's feelings is perfectly agreeable to the scripture as the case of the converted jailor will show. And many a real Christian though not all such have experienced such a mighty and sudden revolution within them. And it would be a decisive mark of a real change of heart were it not for the fact that many instances are on record in which all these feelings have been supposed to be experienced and yet the persons have at length returned to the world like the dog to his vomit thus proving their feelings to be delusion. And this consideration shows the necessity of having something to corroborate the reality of genuineness of such a change in the heart. And this something is an obedient life.

The same remarks might be applicable to all those exercises which are supposed to furnish evidence of a new heart - such as an anxiety for the impenitent - an unusual spirit of prayer feeling of ardent affection towards everything religious - a spirit of humility etc. We say they are not to be confided in without some corroborating evidence - not because they are not real Christian exercises: for they most certainly are such; but because they have sometimes been counterfeited. Satan can and sometimes does transform himself into an angel of light and he has been able to produce in the hearts of some individuals something so much resembling real religious exercises that men in an unguarded moment have been deluded into the belief that they were really converted when in fact they remain in the gall of bitterness and then bond of iniquity. But the text applies a test of these supposed religious feelings. If they lead to unreserved and universal obedience they are the work of God - if they do not lead to this they are the work of Satan.

It may be urged however in reply that these considerations although they show the security of obedience in general terms still do not prove universal and entire obedience to be necessary. And perhaps a man may have a firm assurance of his piety if he feels disposed to observe the great fundamental commandments of God's laws although he neglect some others of minor importance. But what ground is there in the scriptures for making any exception in regard to any - even the least of God's commandments? Surely the text furnishes none: for we might as well suppose according to the text that a man might neglect the most important commands and observe the lesser ones and yet have evidence of piety. Christ does not say to his followers - observe the principal part of the commandments and give I give you and you shall have conclusive evidence that you are my friend: but he says, *ye are my friends if I do whatsoever I command you.* But there is a passage of scripture conclusive on the point: *whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all.* That is to say he who knowingly and habitually violates one of God's commandments shows that his heart is not right and entitles as real (evidences as much) disregard and contempt of the Lawgiver as if he violates every command of the decalogue. Hence then we may conclude most certainly that not only a partial but an universal and

unreserved obedience is absolutely necessary to accompany other evidence of our Christian character or we can never know can never have an assurance that we are the friends and servants of Christ. It is presumed my hearers that not one of you have any doubt on a point so clear and essential. I propose therefore to draw some inferences from the subject.

In the first place I suggest a caution. Let no one conclude from what has been said that the mere performance of good works is in itself conclusive proof that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus and that all other evidences are of no value because they are sometimes counterfeited. So are good works counterfeited. Many a man who had little doubt that his supposed observance of the commandments of God would furnish him with a sure passport to heaven has doubtless found in eternity that his obedience was merely external and not from a supreme love to God. Obedience is however necessary to show that our exercises are not delusions; and exercises are necessary to prove obedience to be founded on right motives. There is not any one evidence of a Christian character that may not be counterfeited: yet when they all meet together in an individual the conclusion is inevitable that such a person is a Christian. They form a constellation too bright for Satan to imitate. Religious exercises therefore such as conviction for sin - a sense of unworthiness and demerit - a spirit of prayer and humility and patience - these are as necessary as religious deeds to prove us adopted into the family of God. But still the one without the other does not afford any satisfactory ground for hope.

In the second place that subject shows us that no degree of conviction for sin and no ecstasies of joy succeeding - nor any degree of assurance in young converts afford any conclusive evidence of their regeneration unless these things be succeeded by an entire and universal obedience. When such persons find within themselves a disposition to take up the cross daily to follow Christ - when they find taking hold of the work of religion not from a momentary impulse but as a business for life - when they find themselves more desirous to do the will of God than to obtain visions and revelations of their interest in Christ - in short when they find themselves, *adding to their faith virtue and to virtue knowledge and to knowledge temperance and to temperance patience and to patience godliness and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness charity* - then do such persons begin to exhibit a conclusive evidence to themselves and others that the work of religion is really begun in their hearts and especially as weeks and months pass away, *these things be in them and abound so that they be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour*, then may we be, *confident that he which hath begun a good work in them will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ*.

In the third place let not the young convert be discouraged because he finds himself so far deficient in his obedience to the commandments of Christ. Let him not be discouraged I say if he finds within himself earnest desires and sincere endeavors to obey every one of the requirements of scripture. He has but just entered the Christian course and it is to be expected that he will find great difficulties in the way of his obedience arising from a wicked and deceitful heart an opposing world and a subtle adversary from the lower world. This Christian who has long been engaged in the conflict may be expected to exhibit a more perfect obedience because he is better able to cope with this spiritual enemies. And if the young convert find a sincere and ardent desire to fulfill all righteousness and a deep penitence for his deficiencies he may hope also to go on unto perfection and be a successful soldier of Christ. Let his deficiencies (shortcomings) in duty lead him not to despair and sloth but to renewed and more diligent exertions. Some in such case give up their hope and abandon all efforts.

In the last place the subject discovers to us a probable reason why very many real Christians are left to doubt and darkness.

It is because they live in the habitual neglect of some known duty. And perhaps they are sincere in this



neglect assigning is a reason that before they attempt to performance they want a brighter evidence of their interest in the merits of Christ - lest by attempting to perform the duty they shall be guilty of greater sin than they now are in neglecting it. If they could only obtain conclusive evidence of their change of heart they feel resolved to enter vigorously upon this neglected duty. But the text cuts such persons off from any reasonable expectation of obtaining evidence of their piety so long as they neglect to observe the least of Christ's commandments. For it is implied in the declaration, *hereby do we know that we know him if we keep his commandments*, implies that we shall not know that we know him unless we keep his commandments. To observe these in the way and the only way in which in ordinary cases evidence can be obtained that we are the children of God. If we neglect therefore the least of Christ's commandments we cannot expect that our doubts will ever be removed - but that they will increase every succeeding month.

These remarks will apply to the omission of any known duty: but there is one case of neglect that is of very frequent occurrence and which deserves particular remarks. I mean the neglect of many who indulge a hope that they are Christians to make a feeble profession of religion. There is scarcely a person who has any degree of hope that he is a child of God who does not believe it his duty to comply with the command of Christ respecting the Lord's supper, this do in remembrance of me, and therefore we need not stop to show that this is one of God's commandments. But the reason generally offered in such cases for not taking the vows of God upon them in public is that their hope is too feeble and their doubts too many. But if the text be true to neglect of such a command of life is to continue in doubt - since a strong faith is promised only to those who do whatever Christ commands them. And we would ask those who neglect this duty on such grounds whether as weeks and months and perhaps years pass away they do find their evidences brightening? Do they not rather find them becoming firmer and fewer? It is we believe almost generally the fact that those who neglect this solemn duty on such grounds do find that instead of becoming more fit for the ordinance of the Lord's supper they become less so and find their darkness to increase. At this rate how long will it be before they will be ready to take up the cross and follow Christ.

But persons of this description may reply do you wish us to profess that religion we do not possess? Certainly not we answer. But there are very many who, though they feel unfit for coming to the Lord's table, still indulge hope that they are Christians. That is to say in plain words they feel as if they should join his perfectly pure and holy church in heaven whenever they die but still feel as if they were not fit for joining the church of Christ on earth. Strange contradiction? and yet frequently to be found!

But say they we may be deceived and then we shall apostatize and disgrace the profession. This may be the case but in nine cases out of ten it is merely a delusion of *sine metu* - to prevent men from doing their whole duty. The truth is it is no small cross to profess religion before an ungodly world and it brings along with it much scoffing and reproach and imposes new restraints upon our worldly inclinations and therefore our hearts shrink from the undertaking. We do not love in have any additional restraints put upon us. Yet so deceitful are our hearts that we imagine that are our neglect of professing Christ proceeds from a fear that we shall wound him in the house of his friends. Whereas we feel but little anxiety that we should dishonor Christ by remaining in the midst of a world lying in wickedness and neglecting to come out from it and be separate. This reflection does not distress us half as much as the fear of disgracing him by apostasy. I do not say that this is the fact in every case: but it is to be feared that in too many cases our hearts do deceive us in this manner.

And can it be that there are any real children of God who are willing to remain in the ranks of his enemies? And to be counted by the world as on their side? Are there any who have felt the love of their

Saviour and yet neglect to come up to his help against the mighty? Christ has a cause on earth to be maintained against powerful enemies and he looks to those whom he has regenerated and washed from their sins to take upon them the whole armor of God and fight manfully in his service. And now is it not ungrateful - does it not look like cowardice to neglect to come forward boldly and decidedly to enlist under the great captain of our salvation and maintain his cause to the utmost of our powers and abilities?

My friend let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter - it is this. We are born either to profess publicly our faith in Christ or to abandon altogether every hope that we are Christians. There is no consistent middle course. For he who is really born again ought to let the world know it and come out from it and be separate and touch not the unclean things and come to the table of his Redeemer and he who is not born again ought to know it and to feel that he is in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. And he ought to feel this soon so that he may repent before he dies. Let us all therefore come to a decision one way or the other. Let us come to a decision soon! For time is hurrying us with an eagle swiftness to the bar of God and what we do must be done quickly. Delay and indecision are the two great instruments by which Satan has led millions to ruin.

Delivered

At Conway April 1822

At Amherst College June 1831

At Amherst College July 1835

At Amherst College September 1842

## Sermon 108 Unworthy Reception of the Lord's Supper

[Sermon No. 108, "Unworthy Reception of the Lord's Supper," I Corinthians 11:29, 1822 May, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 4]

I Corinthians 11:29

*For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

In writing a discourse for these words it is highly important in the first place that we ascertain what is the nature of the damnation here spoken of as a consequence of unworthily partaking of the Lord's supper. It has been the opinion of some that it means nothing else than the eternal damnation of hell. And if this be the sole meaning this is a most alarming passage to those of us who are members of the visible church. For who among us is there who is not conscious of having sometimes eaten and drunk unworthily?

But the after examining the point critically my hearers we feel confident this is not the meaning. Dr. Doddridge thus paraphrases the passage, *For he that eateth and drinketh in an irreverent profane and unworthy manner must certainly displease and provoke God; so that it may truly be said that he eateth and drinketh judgment to himself: he takes the readiest way to bring down the judgments of God upon him, not distinguishing the Lord's body, nor making that proper difference which he ought to make between that and common food.* And in a note he remarks, *I think is the most unhappy mistake in all our versions of the bible that the word κρίμα is here rendered damnation. The apostle afterwards says we are judged (that is as he afterwards explains it if we are corrected) that we may not be condemned; which plainly shows the judgment spoken of might be fatherly chastisements. This sin, as sin, does indeed expose us to condemnation, should God be extreme to mark it as an irreverent behaviour under any other ordinance does; but it is superstition to set this at so vast a distance from all the rest as many do.*

Dr. Macknight an eminent critic has this paraphrase of the text. *For he who eateth and drinketh the Lord's supper improperly subjects himself to punishment because he does not discriminate the symbols of the body of the Lord from common bread and wine designed for the nourishment of life.*

Dr. Scott translates the phrase, *eat and drink judgment to himself: his very attendance on this ordinance says he would offend God and expose him to his righteous judgment because he had made no proper discrimination between the bread and wine which represented the Lord's body as offered on the cross to be a sacrifice for our sins to be received by faith and an ordinary meal. This irreverence being a heinous crime would doubtless subject a man to final condemnation if he did not repent; but it is evident that apostle did not mean that it was in its own nature unpardonable or sealed a man's damnation as many have supposed; for he uses addressing Christians and warning theme to beware of those temporal judgments with which God chastised his offending servants. The scruples and consequent negligence of numbers who seem in other things to obey Christ have no ground in this passage except in the apparent harshness of our translation in which the word that signifies judgment is hardened damnation which commonly means eternal punishment. Thus he -*

Let any one look candidly at the text and context and we think he will allow these comments and explanations to be consistent and scriptural. You recollect the apostle is here reproving the Corinthians for abuse of the Lord's supper. They did not it seems make a suitable distinction between this and a common meal. They brought their own provisions and devoured them apart from their brethren in selfish loneliness and some made this sacred feast an occasion of excess and drunkenness. These abuses were surely very great and received accordingly the marked reprobation of Paul. And he took occasion to exhibit to them the true nature and design of the ordinances and then added the text as a general warning against future perversions of it. But certainly he had his eye principally upon temporal judgments in the passage. For in the next verse he says, *for this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep*. It seems then that the consequence of eating and drinking unworthily had been to some of them sickness of body and to others it had been death. If the latter did not repent before they died doubtless the consequence of eating and drinking unworthily was eternal damnation - just as this might be the consequence of any other sin. But it is most evident that some of the offending Corinthians were only punished with sickness for unworthily partaking of the Lord's supper and therefore the apostle did not mean that the inevitable result of this sin would be the pains of hell forever. It is manifest too that some were more unworthy than others since some were only sick while others were dead. And such doubtless has been the case in every age. No doubt a man may eat and drink so unworthily as to seal up his everlasting damnation. No doubt too a man may do this unworthily and yet have a space left for repentance and suffer nothing but temporal evils for his offence. And so between eating and drinking most unworthily and least unworthily there may be very many degrees and of course different degrees of punishment. I proceed in the second place to mention instances in which professors of religion eat and drink unworthily beginning with those cases which are most offensive in the sight of God and proceeding to those that are less heinous.

The case of Judas Iscariot is probably the strongest that can be mentioned. He sat down to the Lord's Supper knowing himself not only to be destitute of religion but being also resolved to betray his Master. In other words he observed this supper for the purpose of perpetrating a deed of villainy. He was a hypocrite in the most comprehensive sense of the term. Under the cloak of friendship he hid a dagger. He betrayed his Lord and Master and friend with a kiss. No doubt such a man by observing the sacramental supper with such motives did eat and drink to himself damnation without measure and without end. And we have reason to fear that in every succeeding age there have been those who approached the table of Christ knowing themselves to be actuated by no other motive than a wish thereby to promote some worldly selfish object - men perhaps who carried a concealed dagger to plunge into the vitals of that very religion they thus professed to honor and love. But such men must expect they have every reason to expect the by thus hypocritically and abominably eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ they shall be given up, *to strong delusions to believe a lie that they may be damned*. Whether those who profess religion merely because it happens to be fashionable and that they may not lose their popularity without any other motives whether such belong to this class of hypocrites I would not certainly decide. But surely they approximate closely to this class and it would be difficult to draw the line between them.

This case of Judas and his imitators is the only one which we should dare to say will inevitably result in the everlasting destruction of men. We shall proceed to enumerate some other instances of eating and drinking unworthily - and although in certain circumstances some of these cases may be particularly aggravated and may perhaps provoke God to sneer in his wrath that the subjects of them shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven yet ordinarily we believe they like other sins render us liable to everlasting punishment but if repented of will through the rich mercy of God in a Saviour be forgiven.

The second case of an unworthy partaker of the Lord's supper is when a person has united himself with the church in the sincere belief that he was a Christian but finds afterwards that he has deceived himself with a false hope and that he has neither part nor lot in the matter. Most certainly such an one cannot discern the Lord's body and therefore eats and drinks damnation to himself. But he was sincere in his profession of religion and perhaps the injudicious urgency of some Christian friend led him to suppose himself born again when he was still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. And although it was not withstanding a sinful act because he ought to have examined himself more thoroughly and prayerfully yet there is no reason to believe this to be one of the most aggravated kinds of sins and therefore not the unpardonable one. Certainly it will not compare in heinousness with those open and scandalous offenses the apostle reproves in the Corinthians. Yet as we have already remarked some of these were punished only by sickness and if that sickness led them to repentance doubtless they escaped everlasting perdition. Certainly then those persons who in sincerity profess before they possess religion have no reason to conclude themselves given over to destruction but that there is some space and a call to repentance. Their sin is not in ordinary cases the unpardonable one.

But persons of this description who are satisfied that they are still unregenerate will immediately enquire whether they ought not upon the discovery omit to attend the communion service until God be pleased to convert them. The answer we should give to such an enquiry is that it is their duty immediately to repent. But they will say until we have repented ought we not to keep away from the Lord's supper. Again we reply, *except ye repent ye shall all perish. Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.* But we remark in passing that these members of the visible church who live along month after month and year after year in a distressing anxiety lest they are not Christians and who come to the Lord's supper with so deep a sense of their unworthiness that they are almost induced to stay away these are not usually the persons who are eating and drinking damnation to themselves. On the contrary they are generally the most worthy partakers of the body and blood of Christ - and those who sit down to his table as carelessly and unpreparedly as they go about their ordinary business and this not once or twice merely but uniformly these are the members that ought not to have a hope if they have one - and these are eating and drinking damnation to themselves although we have every reason to suppose that in general the door of repentance and mercy is not closed against them if they will rise from their stupidity.

The next instance in which the professor of religion eats and drinks unworthily is when he does not feel the need nor even believe in the doctrine of Christ's atonement. To hold up that grand fundamental principle of revealed religion was the great object in the institution of this sacrament as is evident from the symbols used in it. *The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks he brake it and said, take eat; this is my body which is broken for you. And he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the N. Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* This doctrine that the sufferings and death of Christ procured pardon for believers is mostly forcibly illustrated by the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine and it is only the only thing to which Christ directed the attention of his disciples when he instituted this supper. Now he asks whether the man who denies this doctrine of Christ's vicarious sacrifice can worthily observe an ordinance the grand object of which was to present this doctrine and impress it on the senses the memory and the heart? What would be the object for such an one to commemorate the Lord's supper? There would certainly be no more propriety in it than to observe a feast in commemoration of the death of Paul or Peter or James. Take away from the Christian system the doctrine of atonement and you reduce the eucharist to an unmeaning ceremony. The bread broken and the wine poured out which are so beautifully and forcibly appropriate if that doctrine be true become upon a denial of it totally unmeaning and inapplicable. Indeed this doctrine in its pure

unsophisticated form constitutes the life the essence the glory and this saving efficacy of the Gospel. If this be gone the grand distinction between Christianity and reason is done away. Indeed without this the Christian religion can no more exist than a man whose heart is taken from him. Surely then the man who rejects this truth cannot but eat and drink unworthily although in ordinary cases the door of repentance is still open to him and that precious blood which he has so daringly trodden underfoot may prove the life of his soul.

In the fourth place he eats and drinks unworthily who does not feel his unworthiness.

Certainly brethren we are unworthy of a seat at the Lord's table. For by this transaction we are sealed the children of God that is if we partake in a proper manner. And let us only look at our characters such as they are by nature such as they were when Christ died for us – and let us also look at our lives since we were reconciled to God and if we do not realize that we are unworthy a place where the presence of Christ is so peculiarly felt we must be in a state of awful stupidity. Yet it is no unfrequent thing for communicants to have very inadequate ideas of their vileness in the presence of God. No one indeed as trust will in so many words deny that he does not deserve a place around the sacred board. But very many of us *think of ourselves above what we ought to think*. We are willing Christ should have part of the glory of our salvation if he will leave us the other part. But the truth is that lower our views of ourselves the more sinful and vile our hearts appear to us the more glorious will Christ's character and redemption seem to us. The lower too shall we lie in his peculiar presence and the higher will he exalt us. But if we are puffed up with a conceit of our native or acquired goodness surely that Lord who knows that at our best estate we are untitled and poor and miserable and blind and naked will again I will regard us as eating and drinking unworthily and therefore eating and drinking damnation to ourselves. We ought therefore brethren to pray earnestly to God that he would search us and try us and discover to us the deceitfulness and depravity of our hearts

\* (See over the leaf)

The last thing that causes us to eat and drink unworthily is the neglect of a due preparation for the ordinance. And this deficiency no doubt will apply to more professing Christians than any we have mentioned. It is a melancholy fact that very many of us come to the table of the Lord without having made any special prayers previously – or gone into any special self-examination. The little interest the majority of the members of a church feel in the subject of preparation for their solemn communion seasons is evident from the fact that usually more than half of them do not attend the lecture which is appointed for that particular object. We know they will plead the pressing of worldly concerns. Men however do not usually plead this when called to attend to the things they love ardently. And besides if it be the fact that Christians are so occupied in the world that it is not possible for them to spend two hours in the week in special preparation for a solemn ordinance of their religion it is high time such lecture were given up. It has not however been thought proper to abandon this by the most devoted Christians in our land. Such usually find no difficulty in attending upon the preparatory lecture and there is reason to fear that others would find their difficulties to vanish were they to be more zealous for God and less ardent in their attachment to the world. Is there not also reason to fear that those who neglect this public means of getting their hearts ready for communion do also generally neglect private preparation? Will not the same degree of attachment to the world which will keep a man away from God's sanctuary keep him away from his closet.

But brethren can it be that he who does not pray specially secretly and earnestly in his closet and does not go into close self-examination previously to his approach to the sacred elements can such an one

avoid eating and drinking unworthily and therefore eating and drinking damnation to himself? And what will be the nature of his damnation? It will be an awful judgment of God viz. a continuance of his stupidity. The ordinance will prove to him a dead letter to say the least. More probably it will prove the means of hardening him still more. And finally it will prove everlasting destruction except he repent.

\* The fifth circumstance that causes us to eat and drink unworthily is the want of brotherly love.

*If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. If a man say I love God, says John, and hateth his brother he is a liar for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? What hypocrisy then is it what absurdity for a person to set down to the table of his Lord and Master in token of his love for Him and yet carry within him a hatred of a brother who is seated with him at the same table so strong and so bitter that he cannot peaceably transact with him the ordinary concerns of his life! Such an one without any question eats and drinks damnation to himself and it is a damnation not of the mildest character. For we are told that *whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.**

And now brethren in the service of the subject let the timid and doubting and fearful though sincere and humble believer take courage. Let the bold and confident professor tremble. Let those of us who have made no preparation for the Lord's table we are about to approach remember that the probability is we shall not this day discern the Lord's body and that we shall go away as unfeeling and unhumbled as ever. God grant none of us this day fill up the measure of damnation - God grant we may none of us be given up to strong delusions to believe a lie that we may be damned!

Delivered

At Conway May 1822

At Conway September 1825

## Sermon 109 Spring

[Sermon No. 109, "Spring," Song of Solomon 2:11-13, 1822 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 4]

Song of Solomon 2:11-13

*The winter is past the rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth;  
the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;  
the fig tree putteth forth her green figs and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.*

The most irreligious and corrupt men are often watchful observers of the changes that take place in the creation around them. Their views however extend no farther than the actual phenomena unless it be to examine how far those phenomena affect worldly concerns. But the Christian when he observes the changing seasons the waxing and the waning moon and the approaching and receding sun has his thoughts directed irresistibly to his heavenly Father and he sees in every change his almighty and merciful hand secretly directing and upholding all. This thought gives a double relish to his views of nature. Without the presence of God creation would seem a mere skeleton a body without a soul. But to an irreligious man the thought that an holy God is manifest in every object is painful and he endeavours to banish it from his mind.

Among the revolutions of nature none strikes the attention more forcibly than the return of spring. The frozen bonds of winter are unlocked - the hoar frost and the snow are scattered before the winds from the chambers of the south and the increasing heat of a more vertical sun. The brown and deathlike aspect of the fields is changed into a delightful green - and the green plants of the north are exchanged for the mild and fragrant zephyrs of May. Gone is the dreariness and silence of the landscape and in their place we see the expanding bud and the opening flower and hear the voice of melody from the airy songsters who have returned from their southern retreats. But it is idle to attempt a description of spring when there is one given by the pen of inspiration so sweetly simple and interesting. *The winter is past the rain is over and gone the flowers appear on the earth the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs and the vines with tender grapes give a good smell.*

This description needs no remarks to explain it except perhaps to observe that the word translated turtle means a turtle dove or a ring dove which in the eastern world is a bird of passage as appears from a verse in Jeremiah – *The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming.* We now proceed to make a religious improvement of the season of spring. And it is calculated both to reprove us and to afford us some striking emblems of many important changes that are experienced in the condition of men. Let us first look at the spring for a moment calculated for our reproof. This interesting season reproves us for our remissness in duty. Jeremiah makes this use of the prompt and regular return of certain birds of passage in the verse just quoted: *The stork knoweth her appointed times and the crane and the swallow observeth the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.* Solomon points us to the industry of the ant as a model for our imitation. *Go to the ant and thou sluggard consider her ways and be wise. Which having no guide overseas or ruler provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the*



*harvest. How long wilt thou keep O sluggard when wilt thou rise out of thy sleep. Yet a little sleep a little slumber a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that traveleth and thy want as an armed man.*

*The little ants for one poor grain  
Labour and toil and strive  
Yet we who have a heaven to obtain  
How negligent we live!  
We for whose sakes all nature stands  
And stars their courses move  
We for whose guard the angels band  
Come flying down from above:  
We for whom God the Son came down  
And labored for our good  
How careless to secure that crown  
He purchased with his blood! [Source: A hymn]*

We may refer also to the words of John to illustrate this point (although perhaps they were not intended by him to apply immediately to this subject). *But ask now the beasts says he and they shall teach thee; and fowls of the air and they shall tell thee. Or speak to the earth and it shall teach thee and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.* The beasts of the field and the fowls of the air do indeed teach us at this season if we will attend to the lesson. They delay not a day to commence the active exertions necessary for their future comfort. They have never learned from man who professes himself to be the Lord to put off till tomorrow what can be done today. How forcibly does the morning song of the lark and the robin (wakeful birds) reprove those of us who neglect to offer up our morning sacrifice of prayer and praise to God! O prayerless men can you listen to their morning notes without feeling the strings of conscience! Can you see them displaying the glory of their Creator while you are dishonoring him. And come can you impenitent man can you see unaffected these beasts and birds improving the very first hours of that season allotted them to provide for their future wants while you are making no improvement of that previous day of grace you now enjoy! Their spring their summer and their harvest will soon be past: but they will improve them in such a manner that they will be provided in winter with habitations and food. *So your spiritual spring and summer and harvest will soon be past – and the night of eternity will settle upon your souls. But alas you will then have no building of God no house not made with hands eternal in the heavens into which you can enter. You are neglecting to lay up treasures in the heavens where no thief approacheth neither moth corrupteth* and soon will you have to take up the unavailing and bitter lamentation *the harvest is past the summer is ended and we are not saved.*

Ye who are young O remember that you are now in the spring of life and that the birds and flowers of holiness should now be expanding in your hearts if you hope for fruit in old age and for glory in heaven. The husbandman expects no harvest if he suffer himself to sit idle in spring and casts no seed into the ground. And if we neglect religion while young we have no more reason to hope for a Spiritual harvest. We must expect on the contrary that our hearts will uncultivated and be choked with weeds which in the autumn will be burned with fire unquenchable.

I proceed in the second place to mention some of these things in the moral world of which the spring of the year is emblematical.

In the first place is a lively emblem of the introduction of Christianity into the world. For four thousand years had the earth lain a desolate and cheerless moral waste. A spiritual winter and encircled it with its deathlike embrace. Save in the little kingdom of Judea the whole earth presented nothing but an unalleviated moral ruin. Everywhere else and often even there men *had changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and fourfooted beasts and creeping things. They had changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator.* To these senseless idols these storks and stones men bowed in ignominious and polluted worship. They worshipped and served too uncontrolled their own vile lusts and appetites – *being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy murder, debate deceit malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God despiteful proud boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, and implacable unmerciful.* In short, *they had all gone out of the way - they were together become unprofitable. There was none that did good no not one. Their throat was an open sepulchre: with their tongues they used deceit the poison of asps was under their lips: whose mouth was full of cursing and bitterness: their feet were swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery were in their ways. And the way of peace they knew not. There was no fear of God before their eyes.*

Such is the awful description the pen of inspiration has given not of one kingdom but of the whole world before the introduction of the Gospel. And not only were men thus given up to uncleanness and vile affections but there was a darkness like that of the deepest midnight hanging over the grave. If a momentary ray of light from another sometimes crossed that dark valley it was speedily lost in the Egyptian night and men were left to ignorance of their immortality groveling their wretched way through life and in the emphatic language of scripture *being without Christ having not hope and without God in the world.*

But when the sun of righteousness arose on the world it might truly be said *the winter is past the flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds is come.* Christ entered the dark recesses of the grave and threw open its chambers to the light of immortality. He passed through them into heaven leaving a bright and glorious path open for all his followers. On the ruins of pagan abominations the flowers of hope and holiness and immortality sprang up and threw abroad their delightful fragrance from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. The moral world arose in renovated beauty and although that spring has had to struggle with many a cold wind and many an icy mountain yet has it gradually advanced even unto this day and is now rapidly extending its empire from the rising unto the setting sun.

In the second place the spring of the year is a beautiful emblem of the regeneration of a soul.

You recollect how cheerless is the season of winter when creation is locked up in strong fetters and no opening bird or flower cheers the landscape. Nature seems to be in her grave and unless the hand of Providence be stretched out to produce a change it seems if she must sleep in her grave forever.

Just so it is with the soul of man while unregenerate. All the affections are locked up in icy selfishness and the flowers of holiness are wanting. No love to God – no well-founded hope of future glory spring up and adorn the heart - but the soul presents a dreary ruin where spiritual death and desolation reign in gloomy and undisputed sovereignty.

*And you hath he quickened,* says Paul to the Ephesian Christians, *who were dead in trespasses and sins. We know,* says John, *that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.* Indeed

natural death is a state of privation and insensibility aptly representing the spiritual state of the unanswered heart. And the season of winter is a lively emblem of death which whether natural or spiritual.

Look now at the heart on which the Spirit has shared his life giving influences and you will be constrained to say the winter is past the flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of the birds is come. The soul has burnt its selfish fetters and the streams of holy affection flow and overflow in their passage towards God and towards men. The plants of holiness seem to be taking a deep root in the heart and their rising branches already present the opening flowers and promise an abundant harvest. A new song is heard bursting from the regenerate land – worthy is the Lamb that was slain to secure to wisdom and honor and power and blessing. Not half so invigorating and sweet are the briars of spring as are the influences of the Spirit upon this new born soul and not half so pleasant to the eye is it to gaze upon the diversified beauties of the vernal landscape as it is for the man who loves God to look upon one who exhibits evidence that his soul has been renewed after the image of him that created him.

A third object of which spring is strikingly emblematic is a revival of religion.

In the winter season so dormant is the vegetable kingdom that it requires much attention to be able to distinguish those trees and plants that have life in them from those that are dead. To a general observer indeed they all appear to be dead – shorn of their leaves their flowers and their fruit. And there are seasons and these not infrequent when the Church of Christ in a particular region is in precisely such a state. Professors of religion have mingled with the world so that little difference appears between the religious and the irreligious.

When the spring of the year opens up on the vegetable world however it is then made manifest what trees and plants have life remaining in them and which are utterly dead. The living ones shoot forth their foliage and flowers and the dead ones remain unaltered barren and leafless and flowerless. So when the divine influences produce a revival of religion in any place the real children of God are made manifest and also the children of darkness. The Christian comes out from the world and becomes clothed with the rich foliage of flowers and fruit of religion - while the sinner remains as stupid and dead as barren and desolate as before. The contrast between the two is so striking that it cannot be mistaken by the most careless observer. It is manifest at once that the one is the friend and the other the enemy of God. And as in the spring the warm showers and sun cause many new plants to spring up from the dead so do the showers of divine grace in time of a revival cause the seed of God's word which has been sown in mercy an unregenerate heart to expand and send forth the plants of holiness which soon exhibit their flowers and will produce fruit in succeeding years.

My hearers the spring of the year has now opened upon us in all its enticing beauty – and this land of hills and valleys is beginning to be clothed with all its rich variety of verdure.

We tread in our walks upon a floral carpet and we are saluted by the cheerful songs of the birds. But there is one circumstance that spreads a melancholy over the scene. But with some of us there is little difference between the state of the earth and the state of our hearts. Alas! Alas! There is a winter still resting upon our souls. The warmth of the ardor of divine love do now expand our bosoms - the flowers of holiness are withered and fallen and the ice of stupidity and selfishness still contract and benumb our affections. It is spring abroad. It is winter within. It is beautiful and healthful and animating abroad. It is desolate and sickening and deadening within. God is praised every where abroad. He is neglected and dishonored within. Few are the trees in our forest that remain without foliage at this season. But alas

how many of our friends and acquaintances exhibit no signs of spiritual life and remain like the heath in the desert, that heath which when good cometh a salt parcheth an uninhabited land.

The last thing that I shall mention of which the spring is emblematic is the future resurrection of the body.

The grave has always been and still is a dreary and a desolate spot. All is dark and is silent at the tomb. No spring is ever dawned on that wintry abode: but bound in the close locked arms of death millions seem there to be sleeping their eternal sleep. The flowers spring up on the graves of our friends but their remains sleep on and to the eye of unassisted reason seem destined never to survive. But blessed be God there is a season coming when this long winter of the grave will be over and spring will visit the mouldering urn. Then will corruption put on incorruption and mortality will put on immortality. Those who sleep in Jesus will then awake in the likeness of the glory of Christ to a never ending never fading spring. For Christ has purchased their redemption from sin and death and procured for them spiritual and immortal bodies and opened for their reception the ever blooming Paradise of God. O it will be a glorious resurrection for the righteous!

*See truth love and mercy in triumph descending  
And nature all glowing in Eden's first bloom  
On the cold cheek of death smiles and roses blending are  
And beauty immortal awakes from the tomb. [Poem by James Beattie]*

And my Christian hearers, this delightful vernal season of man will soon come. Those pious friends who now sleep in the silent and wintry grave will sleep there but a little longer. We must soon deposit our frail bodies by their side. But then sleep will be short. Already I hear the shout of the archangel which awarded our sleeping dust. Already I fancy I feel the undecaying vigor of those spiritual bodies which will be ours. I see the Redeemer coming with his attendant angels on the clouds of heaven drawing all after him whose sins are washed in his blood - and lo! he opens the gates of Paradise the New Jerusalem and discloses the beauties of the Paradise of God. Then I see the amaranthine flowers in ceaseless bloom - there is the tree of life bearing twelve manner of fruits and yielding her fruits every month and there flows the river of the water of life. This, O this is the eternal abode of the righteous. But wicked will never enter there. (Repeat thrice)

Delivered

At Conway May 1822

At Conway May 1826

At Shelburne May 1822

At Sunderland May 1825

At Amherst North Parish May 1828

At Leverett June 1832

At Hadley Mills May 29 1836

At Amherst East Parish June 1836

At Enfield May 1841

At Amherst College May 1844

## Sermon 110 Mourners Directed to Christ

[Sermon No. 110, "Mourners Directed to Christ," Matthew 14:12, 1822 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 4]

Matthew 14:12

*And his disciples came and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.*

Whatever opinions Christians may have in regard to the practice of dancing in general all will no doubt agree in lamenting its effects in a particular instance recorded in scripture. It caused the martyrdom of one of the most eminent servants of God that ever lived. John the Baptist whose holiness and purity struck an awe into the hearts of hardened kings so that they shrunk from taking his life at last fell a sacrifice to the hatred of a voluptuous and vile woman. This unyielding servant of God had boldly declared unto (Philip the brother of King) Herod that it was not lawful for him to marry Herodias because she was the wife of his brother Philip who was still living. Herod however regarded not his admonition and thus John drew upon himself the hatred of the king and Herodias. He was cast into prison but his life was spared, *for Herod feared John*. And although *Herodias would have killed him yet she could not*. At length however, *Herod on his birth day made a supper to his Lords high captains and chief estates of Galilee*, and thus laid himself open to the intrigues of this abandoned woman who thirsted for the blood of this man of God. The mere dancing of Herodias' daughter before Herod drew from him that most foolish and mad promise - *Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee unto the half of my kingdom*. The bloody prostitute Herodias seized upon the favourable moment for getting her vengeance. It is not enough that John be beheaded in prison but his head must be brought to her and as an ancient Father of the church informs her she pulled out the tongue and pierced it with a needle thus manifesting her savage fiendlike malice.

John had many disciples: and some of them it seems watched his fate with tender solicitude. After his death they went and obtained permission to bury his corpse and having performed this last and only office of humanity in their power they went and told Jesus.

Here let us pause one moment my hearers to observe how perfectly Christian was the conduct of these disciples. Had they been the followers of a worldly chief who was thus cruelly murdered we should hear from the pen of their historian that being full of indignation against the inhuman Herod they collected together to devise some plan for avenging the death of their master. But nothing like this was seen in the conduct of these disciples. Though they loved their master and no doubt wept most sincerely over his ashes yet at the same time they remembered that their kingdom was not of this world and that they must not return evil for evil. They had been taught to regard every event as under the direction of an all wise and merciful God who would cause even the wrath of man to praise him and the remainder of wrath that would restrain. They therefore submitted to the mysterious and painful dispensation by which their master was taken away in the midst of his usefulness and being made a victim to ungodly lust – and a martyr in the cause of truth. They knew it would not promote but greatly retard the cause of holiness to endeavour to avenge the death of John. Yet there was one consolation remaining. They could go and tell Jesus of their griefs. They well knew that He was a greater master for they had heard the Baptist declare, *he that cometh after me is mightier than I whose shoes I am not worthy to bear*. He would sympathize with them in the loss of John and teach them more clearly the lesson of submission to

the dealings of Providence: and he too was able to instruct them even more perfectly than the Baptist the great things pertaining to the kingdom of God and how they might obtain an interest in it. He therefore could bind up their bleeding hearts and pour the oil of consolation into their wounded spirits.

But my hearers, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever*. In all our afflictions therefore when we have done all we can do for departed friends when we have consigned them to the peaceful tomb then can we go and tell Jesus. His ear is as much open to our tale of sorrow now as it was to the disciples of John and he is not far from any one of us - for we are assured it is he who made and upholds the universe and that, *He searcheth the reins and hearts*. He has himself declared - *Lo I am with you always even to the end of the world*. Let us first spend a few moments in enquiring into the grounds of expecting relief under trial by going and unbosoming our hearts to Jesus.

In the first place, Christ is able to afford us relief.

We may feel deeply for our friends in affliction and yet be unable to afford them any permanent effectual consolation because we are wanting in the power. So Christ may prove a willingness to comfort the afflicted but if he be destitute of the ability it will avail us little to apply to him. But we are told from his own lips that, *all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth*. And we cannot doubt a moment the ability of him to do all things by whom all things in heaven and earth visible and invisible were created and who now upholds them all in existence. He said himself while on earth, *the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind to set at liberty them that are bruised*. Indeed after all the miracles he performed well on earth - when we see Lazarus coming forth from the grave and his command and the son of the widow rising from his coffin - when we see the dumb speaking - the blind opening their eyes - the lame walking and the leprous cleansed - when we find the apostle giving him the title of God and surrounding him with all the attributes of Jehovah it might seem a waste of time to endeavor to prove his ability to impart support to the bereaved were it not for the fact that a strong faith in this power seems necessary for the afflicted in order that they may realize upon themselves his consolations. We find that when he was on earth that a faith in his ability to secure the miserable was usually required by him before he stretched out an arm of sustaining mercy to them. And surely this same faith will be requisite now when so much brighter evidence of his power has been revealed in the N. Testament.

In the next place Christ has a tender feeling of compassion for the afflicted.

None can sympathize with the mourner like those who have experienced similar sorrows: and among all the forms of affliction to be found on earth there is scarcely one of which Christ was not made the subject while incarnate. His life was made his life was made up of suffering. He endured the evils of poverty and persecution. His friends often deserted him and betrayed his cause and one of them his life and he was called to weep at the graves of others whom disease or the sword had destroyed. Indeed so great were the trials of our Saviour that according to an inspired historian of ancient times he was often seen to weep but seldom to smile and according to an inspired historian, *he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*. How appropriate and consoling then is the reasoning of Paul on this subject - *For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*. Let the mourner come then and tell Jesus of his sorrows as he would tell a bosom friend assured that this divine intercessor possessed even now a tender fellow feelings for his afflictions - that his heart knows our infirmities and can pity them and

sympathize with them. Though all other friends fail this kind friend in heaven will never cease to feel for the trials of his younger brethren on earth and he will plead for them in all the eloquence of disinterested compassion that the Father would send them another Comforter even the Spirit of truth who will sustain their fainting Spirits and bind up their bleeding hearts.

In the third place Christ has promised to support and comfort his afflicted disciples.

*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.* This is the kind language of the Saviour; and it applies not merely to the man who is laboring under a sense of sin; but also to those who are bereaved a friends or earthly comforts although no doubt the invitation had a prime reference to the man burdened with sin. But indeed all affliction is the result of sin: and when our friends are taken away we should mourn more on account of sins than for the loss we sustain. For if we are not led to consider the cause of our trials we shall not improve by them. The mourner therefore who goes and tells Jesus of his sorrows in a proper manner will go burdened with a deep sense of the evil of sin and if he does come with us such a load on his soul he has the sure promise of Christ that he shall be disburdened.

The tenderness of Christ to the afflicted soul who comes to him for relief is beautifully expressed in another passage applied by Matthew to Christ - *A bruised seed shall he not break and the smoking flame shall he not quench until he send forth judgment unto victory.* What else but a bruised seed is the soul that he has had a dear friend torn from it by the vilest hand of death! The heart feels itself mangled and bleeding and almost ready to sink under its wounds. It seems as if there were no balm on earth that has the power to assuage the anguish - nay scarcely is there anything on earth that does not aggravate distress. But there is balm in Gilead which can sooth even the anguished bosom of the mourner – a Physician is there who applies so tenderly the soft hand of support and consolation that the bruised and broken heart finds itself restored ere it is aware and how sweet and sustaining are the words of consolation such a soul receives from this great Physician. *Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God the Holy One of Israel thy Saviour. For a small moment have I forsaken thee with but with great mercies will I gather thee - In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, behold I lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay the foundations with sapphires. No weapon that is formed against me shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against me in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord.*

That same Saviour in his word hath said, *Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.* And by the mouth of his inspired saints he has said, *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him.* My Son, says Paul, *despise not the chastenings of the Lord neither faint when those art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. No chastening seemeth for the present joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*

Such is the firm ground of confidence presented to the believing mourner that he shall obtain consolation and support if he go and tell Jesus his sorrows. Christ is able to afford him relief. He has a

fellow feeling of compassion for the afflicted and he has kindly promised to succor those who cast their burdens upon him. But it may be enquired what is the nature of that relief and consolation the mourner may hope to receive from the Redeemer?

In the first place he may hope to be made more deeply sensible that he deserves his afflictions.

One great bar that lies in the way of perfect resignation to God's will is a secret feeling that we do not really deserve such trials. We see others around us who seem more wicked than ourselves yet have greater prosperity than we and we cannot see why we should be punished so severely. Men are not willing to acknowledge that they have such a feeling: yet God sees this murmuring in some. And the first step toward resignation and consolation is to be sensible of our demerits. Such a sense will Christ give those who come humbly and sincerely to tell him their sorrows.

The mourner may expect in the next place that Christ will give him repentance.

Never can we have any genuine lasting consolation under affliction until we are brought to sorrow over our sins after a godly manner. The temple of Christian's peace can never be entered but through the narrow gate of repentance. This subdues a rebellious heart which has been wandering from God - this detaches our affections from idols - this leads us to the newness of life and the results of this is humility and peace which the world cannot give nor take away.

The third thing the mourner may expect from Jesus is to have given him a correct estimate of this world and the next.

In prosperity we uniformly expect too much from this world and form too high an estimate of it. So long as we have this feeling we shall form too low an idea of the value of eternity. But Christ can show us in striking colours how perishable and uncertain is every thing on earth and how grand and interesting is every thing relating to eternity. When our views are thus corrected we shall act in some measure conformable to the true estimate - that is we shall view everything as of little value or importance that does not tend to prepare us for eternal glory.

Another thing Christ will teach the humble mourner is to realize that death is near him.

*All men think all men mortal but themselves*, says the poet. They know indeed that they must die but they do not feel as if they were to die soon. Yet affliction if sanctified and applied by the Spirit of Christ dissipates the delusion and causes the mourner to feel that he holds his life by a feeble tenure - that he hangs on a brittle thread and that he has no security for a moment. This leads him if he be not awfully stupid to enquire, *Am I prepared to meet my God in judgment?*

Christ will likewise inspire in the mourner who comes to him a renewed Spirit of prayer.

If such be not the effect of affliction on the man he has every reason to fear that Christ is not his friend that he has not gone and in a proper manner told Jesus of his trials. For the closet is the spot where is found the most solid and permanent relief in times of trial. Their Christ manifests himself peculiarly to the believer - and there does he find a holy calm and resignation which will bring him up above the wakes of trouble. O if the mourner does not pray constantly and earnestly and feelingly he is most certainly making no good improvement of his bereavement but he is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.



Finally Christ gives the mourner genuine resignation to the will of God.

This is the grand result of all the particular gifts and exercises we have mentioned. It is the crown of the whole – and from the man who feels an unreserved submission to God who rejoices in his government even when he is suffering under its dispensations from him the string of affliction is taken away. And if there be a feeling on earth that is worthy to be called happiness it is the feeling which rejoices in the sovereignty and government of God and rejoices that he rules over all. This is a foretaste of the joys of Paradise when the will of the believer will be entirely swallowed up in the will of the Creator and perfect peace will be the glorious result.

The subject we have been discussing my hearers furnishes us with a test for determining whether we are Christians. In seasons of affliction do we go and do we love to go and tell Jesus of our sorrows? And do we find those reliefs and consolations Jesus is able and willing to give? If we do, is it not some proof that we love the Savior? If we neither unburden our sorrows to Him nor find a sense of our sinfulness nor repentance – nor a more correct estimate of the comparative value of religion and the world nor a realizing sense of the nearness of death nor a new Spirit of prayer nor unreserved submission to God's will then have we not the utmost reason to fear that we do not love nor serve the Saviour? And if we do not love him where can we find a friend to succor and comfort us in affliction?

But what a rich source of consolation is it to the believer that he has such a friend to whom he can reveal his sorrows! When we have buried a husband or a wife - a father or a mother - a son or a daughter a brother or a sister how it will relieve the aching heart to go and tell Jesus! All other friends are incapable of giving us any permanent relief - but this Almighty friend touched with a feeling of our infirmities stands ever ready to wipe the tear from the eye of misery - to bind up the bleeding spirit and give everlasting consolation to the afflicted heart.

Delivered

At Conway June 1822

## Sermon 111 Instruction of Children

[Sermon No. 111, "Instruction of Children," Proverbs 22:6, 1822 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 4]

Proverbs 22:6

*Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

*[The first part of this sermon deals with the responsibilities of parents to instruct their children in religion; the last part includes what appears to be an alternate ending about a new Sabbath school and the reasons parents should want their children to attend.]*

There is a particular kind of school instruction adopted in various parts of the world in which a single superintendent is enabled to instruct several hundred scholars. This is effected by dividing the school into a number of classes and appointing the best scholars to take charge of them and instruct them. Now there is a resemblance between this system and that by which God instructs this ignorant world. All inhabitants of the globe constitute in fact one great school under the superintendence of the King of Kings and Lord of lords. Yet he has in wise plans divided mankind into a great number of classes and at the head of these inferior teachers are appointed who are to instruct their several divisions in the great lessons they are taught of God. There is indeed but one grand science taught in this school and that is how to prepare for eternity. Or rather all other services are made subservient to this.

Among the delegated instructors in this seminary parents occupy an important post. The classes especially committed to them are their children and families. And for their diligent and faithful instruction of these glorious rewards are promised but shame disgrace and punishment of the severest kind follow their neglect. The most glorious of these rewards and the most terrible of these punishments will be awarded at that great time final examination of teachers and scholars which is to take place at the end of the world. There are some temporal rewards however awaiting the faithful and some woes the unfaithful instructor. One of these blessings is mentioned by Solomon in the text. *Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.* Only let the parent place the feet of his child in the paths of piety and virtue in his earliest years and let him lead him along that path till he is accustomed to it and realizes that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness and all her paths peace and that parent will have the satisfaction the greatest a parent can enjoy of seeing his child persevering in the straight and narrow even to old age thus affording happy evidence that he has been trained up for honor glory and immortality in another world. So cheerful a declaration of inspiration should inspire an ardent zeal in the parent that he do not fail of seizing the very earliest moment to begin to instill the lessons of piety into the infant mind and to persevere without fainting in pursuit of a prize so glorious as the temporal and eternal happiness of his offspring. It is highly important then that parents understand definitely what is meant by *training up a child in the way he should go*. It comprehends no doubt the whole of that instruction he receives from his parents. The important enquiry then occurs in what ought a child to be instructed?

In the first place he should be taught so much of the arts and sciences as will preserve him from imposition and if possible so much as will render him respectable for his information and useful by it.

Indeed it is no matter how extensive and particular be the knowledge of young persons. For the more accurate and extended their learning the less danger is there of their abusing it. *A little learning, says a poet, is a dangerous thing.* For as Lord Baron remarks a little smattering in philosophy leads a man into atheism but a thorough acquaintance with it will bring him back again to the belief of a God - and we may add to the belief of revelation and its peculiar doctrines. But although it be the duty if it be possible of every parent to give his children a common education yet their duty in regard to anything beyond this will be very different according to the business in life the child expects to follow - according to the pecuniary resources of the parent and a variety of other considerations. But on this subject I would not in this place enlarge.

In the second place the parent should teach his children the great duties of morality - that is he should teach them how to conduct towards their fellow men.

There is not room under this head to be very particular - yet among the moral duties none is more important to children than a regard to truth since they are probably more in danger of violating this duty in the beginning of life than any other. They should be shown the nature and importance of this virtue in all its relations and the most powerful motives this world or the next can furnish should be set before them to induce them to regard it. They should be cautioned not to dissemble in his dealings among his fellows especially he should not be indulged in that fatal propensity so visible in children to make what is called a good bargain by which is meant that a person hides the defects of his commodities and puts them off upon his neighbor at a greater price than he knows they are worth. This is the foundation and beginning of most kinds of cheating and many kinds of lying and the parent in order to teach his child with success to have a strict regard to truth must himself be free from such juggling and dissimulation.

Kindness and good will towards others and even towards brutes should early be inculcated upon the young mind. They should be dissuaded from the cruel practices so frequent among children of wantonly and unfeelingly destroying the lives of animals since those practices inevitably tend to make them cruel to their fellow men. They should be taught to feel tenderly interested for the suffering and distresses of their fellow men. They are to be directed to treat all men with civility - the aged with respect - and the young with kindness and good manners - avoiding as mean and unbecoming all low and vulgar and profane jesting and ribaldry. In short let the child be made to understand in its full extent that universal rule of morality, *whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even to men.*

In the third place it is an imperious duty of parents to instruct their children in their duties to God.

This is a species of instruction that crowns and informs all the rest and without which all other learning is a little value. And however faithful the parent in other respects if he neglect this he will have an awful account to give at last.

The child must be instructed to reverence love and obey God. All the motives calculated to operate upon a tender mind should be presented before him with an affectionate urgency. The character of God should be explained in its goodness and wisdom. And the child should also be made to know that God hates sin and sinners and not only should he be urged to be good and holy in order that he may win heaven but it should not be concealed from him that there is a stranger punishment prepared for the wicked and that he must inevitably suffer it if he do not love and obey God. Indeed the great leading fundamental truths of revealed religion should early be instilled into the mind of the child. For the truth is unless he know and feel something of the Gospel all other principles and motives will have but a feeble effect upon him. He must be taught to know and love Christ and to realize something of his great

salvation.

The child should also be taught to perform religious duties. He should be taught both by precept and example to make known his requests to God by prayer and supplication – and the nature of this duty must be explained to him. He should also be instructed to keep holy the Sabbaths from his earliest years and to love its sacred hours and if possible be made to consecrate them to the service of God.

This is a brief summary of the matter the parent is to teach his children. We proceed to consider the manner in which he must teach them.

In the first place he should endeavor to adapt his instruction to their understandings.

He may begin very early in their lives to inculcate pious feelings and principles in their souls: for very young children are capable of receiving and comprehending many things of great importance: but whatever is taught at so early a period should be simple, plain and striking. Obedience to parents restraints upon the anger - the existence and goodness of God - the death of Christ - heaven and hell – these are among the earliest lessons that should be communicated. And as the parent finds their faculties expanding he should proceed in a connected plain manner to enforce and explain other facts and principles.

But in order to effect all this he should teach his children repeatedly patiently and affectionately and prayerfully.

He must talk to them of these things when he lies down and when he rises up - when he sits in his house and when he walks by the way: for this perseverance this repetition of line upon line and precept upon precept can alone give the impressions and principles any abiding hold on their memories. He must recollect that eternal consequences are very probably dependent upon his failure or success and he must resolve never to give over his efforts so long as there is a possibility of success. His children will not attend to his instructions but in a careless manner if he cannot excite within them an interest in the subjects and if he finds perverse passions leading them astray these are not reasons for desisting from that effort but incentives to double his diligence and faithfulness and exercise an increased share of patience.

Nor should the parent instruct children in such a cold lifeless and unfeeling manner that they perceive he does not feel the force of what he indicates upon them: but there must be in his manner an affectionate earnestness so great as not to be concealed. The child must be made to see that the parent realizes his danger to be great and the instruction he gives to be incalculably valuable. And in fact if the parent feels himself in any just measure the influence of the truths he inculcates upon them he cannot conceal nor avoid this affection and anxiety.

But after all this instructions should be accompanied by fervent prayer to God for the influences of his Spirit to urge them home upon the hearts of children. Without these influences they will never prove the means of their conversion - the great object every parent should have an view - since without conversion Christ has declared they shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Again children should be taught by example.

Of what avail will it be for a parent to urge his children to be industrious and temperate if he himself is

idle and intemperate? Of what use to urge them to obey and serve God if he disobeys and neglects Him? Of what service to direct them to pray if he sets them no example of prayer?

The last circumstance I shall mention in regard to the manner of instructing children is that when it be practical they should without fail attend a Sabbath school.

The grand object of such school is to bring the young acquainted with the holy scriptures. It is not to inculcate sectarian peculiarities - it is not to teach for doctrines the commandments of men that they are instructed: but to learn them the unadulterated word of God. Now the bible contains and enforces the great duties of morality and of piety.

It shows us what we are to believe concerning God and concerning ourselves and what are our obligations towards God and toward the man. It is indeed the standard of morality and the standard of religion. Every parent therefore must regard it of the utmost importance that his children are thoroughly acquainted with it. There cannot be any danger indeed of being too well acquainted with the scriptures: but there is great danger even after the parent has done all he can do himself, that his children will be but poorly acquainted with it. He must therefore regard the Sabbath school as a valuable auxiliary to his exertions. Not that this institution precludes the necessity of his own exertions; but it affords him an important assistance. There are indeed some peculiar advantages attending this mode of instruction which can be obtained in no other way.

In the first place the novelty of the thing operates as a stimulus upon the child's exertions.

We all of us soon become wearied in following the pursuit of knowledge in the same unvarying track: but if we can find some new path we find our faculty strangely quickened in exploring it. And much more then do children need this excitement. Now in the idea of reciting in the house of God and in a class and all the other circumstances attended upon such a school certainly presents more novelty and therefore excites to greater diligence than the idea of reciting a lesson alone at home to a parent.

In the second place an emulation is inevitably produced among the children of the class to excel their companions.

It has been a moral question whether this kind of emulation be not contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel and productive of mischievous effects. To be emulous to excel in real goodness and holiness of heart is certainly scriptural. *For I speak to you Gentiles, says Paul, in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles I magnify mine office; If by any means I may provoke to emulation these which are my flesh and might save some of them.* The same apostle in another place speaks of emulation which is one of the works of the flesh - viz. an emulation to exceed others in mere worldly attainment such as favour honor and power. Now it is certainly right because Paul has done it for teachers to incite this first kind of emulation in their scholars viz. an emulation to excel in goodness and holiness and among the deeds of holiness and goodness may be reckoned the diligence of children in studying the scriptures if they do it from right motives that is from a desire to be benefited and to benefit others. Yet it must be confessed that the latter kind of emulation being natural to children is apt to exert upon them more influence than the former. The former kind however should be inculcated by teachers upon scholars and they should be guarded against the latter. But let the teacher do what he will it is impossible for him to prevent altogether some sense of emulation in his class.

\*Many of the books in this library are such a nature that they are calculated for the improvement and

edification of us all - the middle aged and aged as well as the young. But they are peculiarly fitted for those or are of the proper age to belong to the two oldest classes in the school both young men and young women. And it is hoped this may be an additional motive to induce all such to come forward and join these classes. Are they already well enough instructed in the Holy Scriptures so as to need no more acquaintance with it? Then are they wiser than the wisest man that ever lived. Are they too old to attend upon this kind of instruction? Can they ever be too old to need no longer to learn what God has revealed concerning the immortal soul? Cannot they read the bible at home and derive all the benefits they could from attendance in the class? No: all experience shows that they would learn ten times faster in the latter way than in the former. But their companions will ridicule them perhaps and call them little children. What then! To Christ neglect his duty because his ungodly acquaintances and townsmen ridiculed him and persecuted him? And would this be an excuse any person will claim to offer to Christ at the day of judgment? Yet after all it is to be feared that this is the grand difficulty that prevents the greater part of young people from attending biblical instruction on the Sabbath. If they will but look closely into their hearts they will find it is pride that keeps them back – it is the fear of being ridiculed by their companions and they prefer disguising the final displeasure of Christ to enduring for a few days the scoffs and sneers of the ungodly. But my young friends you will assuredly mourn hereafter in this world or the next for being ashamed of Christ and the bible. When you come to years of manhood you will lament your neglect of the previous opportunity now afforded you of becoming acquainted with the best volumes ever written. For one I can say I do regret extremely that I have never had the opportunity now offered you. It would have been to me of incalculable advantage and no exertions I can now make will supply the deficiency. If then you have no excuse for neglecting these opportunities that you will dare to offer at the day of judgment and if you will certainly regret your neglect when you arrive at years of manhood do not suffer the fear of the ungodly who will soon be swept away as stubble deter you from doing that which is your duty and your privilege - *lest you mourn at last and say how have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof - and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me!*

*[The following may be an alternate ending]*

...either good or bad - and what effect this will doubtless be to make them better acquainted with the scriptures.

Another peculiar advantage Sabbath school children will enjoy in this place is that they will have access to a valuable library.

The books in this library are such as are calculated to interest and improve the young mind by presenting interesting motives and examples before it. And number will probably be sufficiently large to afford each scholar an opportunity of drawing a different book every fortnight during two or three summers. But the library is intended exclusively for the Sabbath school: and therefore those parents who neglect to send their children will deprive them of its benefit.

\* (Another asterisk)

In the next place children who attend such a school will have their thoughts properly and profitably employed on the Sabbath.

They will be induced to spend at least a considerable portion of the day in studying the Scriptures. This

will tend to keep them from idleness and vanity and they will soon acquire the habit of devoting the Sabbath to religious employments and when this habit is once fixed they can scarcely live without it. Surely this will be a point gained of great importance to the parents and to the children.

Another good effect of a Sabbath school is that by it children early become accustomed to frequent and to love the sanctuary of God.

If a person neglect when young to attend the preaching of the Gospel he will unless God convert him almost inevitably neglect it when arrived at years of manhood. And so on the other hand if he habituates himself early to attend upon it mere habit if nothing better will cause him ordinarily to persevere in it. And there is more hope that the man who attends upon the means of grace will secure converting grace than the man who neglects them. Concerning the latter indeed there is very little if any ground to hope. If therefore Sabbath schools tend to establish a habit of public worship every parent ought to encourage the attendance of his children.

Notwithstanding these peculiar advantages resulting from the institution we are considering is there any parent who feels little interest in the subject and excuses his neglect to bring forward his offspring by saying that he is faithful in giving them religious and biblical instruction himself and they receive it in common weekday schools so that it is unnecessary to do more for them in this respect. But the fact is enough is never done for a child in regard to religion until he is converted. Till he is converted! did I say? Enough is not done if any things more can be done till he enters heaven. And God does sometimes - nay he does often make a Sabbath school the means of a child's regeneration when all other means have failed. It is an institution which God has peculiarly blessed not only in the conversion of scholars but also of teachers. Parents therefore ought to be peculiarly solicitous to make their children members of it because there the showers of divine grace fall most copiously.

Parents and heads of families permit me to ask do you realize the importance of training up your children and domestics in the way they should go? Do you feel what momentous consequences are suspended on your faithfulness? Do you believe solemnly that you are now most probably fixing if you have not already fixed the everlasting destiny of your children either for happiness or misery? Do you seriously believe that you must meet those children at the judgment and then give a peculiarly strict account of your conduct towards them? Do you estimate according to its true worth the institution of Sabbath schools? Have you done as much as you might have done to bring forward your children and induce your neighbors to do the same? If there have been any deficiencies during past years let them no longer exist. Let us make an united effort to fill up the ranks of the school. Let this be accompanied by faithful instruction at home and by a spirit of prayer for the blessings of God on teachers and scholars - then shall we have abundant reason to hope that many of our children and youth, *will be born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever*, and that the blood of those who perish will not lie upon our heads in judgment.

Delivered

At Conway June 1822

## Sermon 112 Christ our Righteousness

[Sermon No. 112, "Christ Our Righteousness," Jeremiah 23:6, 1822 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 5]

Jeremiah 23:6

*And this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness.*

*[This was the morning sermon; see Sermon 113 for the afternoon sermon.]*

It is agreed on all hands that much of the force of this passage is lost in our common translation. The word here rendered Lord should be Jehovah. In the original Hebrew it is Jehovah. Many other cases of this kind occur in the Old Testament. The word Lord is indeed in such places printed in italics: it is not generally known that in these instances Jehovah should be substituted.

But it may be asked of what service would an alteration be since the word Lord means Jehovah. This is sometimes indeed its meaning in English Hebrew and Greek but not always. It is not uncommon now and it was more common formerly to address princes and great men by this title - it being in such cases a term of mere respect. In this sense it was often applied to Christ when he was on earth by many who had no idea that he was in any respect superior to a man. But the title Jehovah is never applied to any other being except the supreme God. It is regarded with so much respect by the Jews even to this day that they will not even pronounce it but substitute the word Lord in its place. And the circumstance was indirectly the cause why our translators make the change of Jehovah for Lord.

In the text however there can be no doubt that the term Jehovah is given to Christ. This will be evident by merely reading the preceding verse - *Behold the days come saith the Lord that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch and a King shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely and this is his name whereby he shall be called - the Lord our righteousness.* Christ is called Jehovah in other passages of the prophets in such a connexion that it is difficult and unnatural to attach any other meaning to the passage as Jeremiah 33: 25,16 - Isaiah 40:10, 48:17, etc. Even the Jews opposed as they are to the Deity of Christ and sacred as is their veneration for the term Jehovah and compelled to admit that in these cases the Messiah is called Jehovah. Now let us just look at another solemn declaration of the Deity as given by Isaiah: *I am Jehovah - that is my name and my glory will I not give to another.* But the name of Christ is in the text said to be Jehovah. Either then Christ is really and truly the supreme God or these are not the words of God. We have our choice of the alternate. And be it my choice to receive implicitly the words of scripture without attempting to modify them so as to suit my taste or to quadrate them to my preconceived opinions.

Yet I am not going to do well at this time on the subject of Christs deity. The text presents another subject - Jehovah our righteousness. Two important questions here present themselves. First, why is it necessary that Christ should be our righteousness? And second, In what sense is he our righteousness?

Let it not be thought however that we regard the deity of Christ as of no importance in relation to the subject of justification by his blood. For we do believe that in this fact lies their chief and prevailing efficacy. Indeed we do not see how it is possible for any being less than Jehovah to make a propitiation



for the sins of the whole world and actually to bear them in his own body on the tree. What is the curse denounced on those who break the law of God? *The soul that sinneth shall die*, that is die eternally - suffer everlasting ruin. But Christ we are told redeems us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us - and we do not see how with a finite nature he could have redeemed man from a curse that in duration at least is infinite.

But to return to the doctrine of Christ's righteousness. None will dispute but that all men have sinned. In order therefore to enter heaven and enjoy the favour of God they must in some way rather be freed from the penalty of that sin. This act is in scripture termed justification. In our courts of justice a man is said to be justified when he is proved innocent of the crime laid to his charge. But this is not the sense in which the term is used in heaven's chancery. For the crime laid to our charge is sin and of this we all are guilty. Yet through faith in Christ God is graciously pleased to regard us as acquitted from condemnation and this act is termed justification.

Yet mere forgiveness of sin is not all that is included in justification. For the man left in this state might notwithstanding his forgiveness be annihilated or placed in a mixed state of happiness and misery. Another the step therefore in justification is to give the believer a title to all the blessings Christ has purchased by his merits - to an inheritance incorruptible undefiled and that fadeth not away - that is to the rewards due to perfect obedience and perhaps even greater than these. Hence the sentiment of Young, *Death gave us more than was in Eden lost*.

From the text we here see that the ground of the believer's acceptance with God is the righteousness of Christ. Let us return to the question why it is necessary Christ should be our righteousness?

In the first place this necessity results from the fact that all men have sinned.

This is one of the arguments by which the apostle Paul and his extensive remarks on the subject employs with great urgency, *All have sinned says he and come short of the glory of God. Being justified truly by his grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God: To declare I say at this time his righteousness that he might be just and the justified of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* This reasoning of Paul may be illustrated by his own words in other places. *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident: for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us: for it is written cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law which could have given life verily righteousness would have been by the law. But the scriptures have concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith.*

This argument of Paul in uninspired language is briefly this. The law of God demands a perfect obedience in order that anyone can be justified but by it: so that if he is guilty of a single sin he is cast off at once from all hope of justification even if his future life be perfectly holy: *For he that offendeth in one*

*point is guilty of all.* The law threatens everlasting perdition to the first and the smallest violation of it and no after obedience or repentance can avert or mitigate its severities. It is declared by God himself that cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. The soul that sinneth it shall die. And the sentences cannot be revoked or altered till heaven and earth pass away. Now as all men without exception have been guilty of at least one sin they are all and each of them cut off altogether from justification before God by any righteousness of their own. We all of us by nature are under a sentence of eternal destruction and no power in heaven or earth but that of Jehovah can avail to reverse or cancel the decree. Blessed be God then that under such disheartening circumstances we are assured that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.*

In the second place it is necessary that Christ should be our righteousness that is it is necessary we should be justified by his righteousness because we perform previous to regeneration no one holy action.

Here again may we secure to the argument of Paul: for this is one of his arguments to cut off all men from the hope of justification by their own works. This is a point upon which he labors with all his energies especially in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. And he evidently regards this doctrine of justification by faith as the foundation of the Gospel as the very essence of a sinner's religion without which no flesh can be saved. In his first chapter to the Romans he gives a lively and a terrific picture of the moral degradation of the Gentile nations. In the second chapter he describes the wickedness of the Jews as little inferior to that of the Heathens. The object of these descriptions is to prove the proposition which he laid down in the first chapter that *the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written the just shall live by faith.* In these verses we see the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's righteousness and that none can be seen in any other way. And to prove this position he gives a separate description of the depravity of Gentiles and Jews as already observed in the first and second chapters showing thereby that their own works would not justify them. And he sums up the whole in this conclusive manner. *What then? Are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles). No: in no wise: for we have before proven both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin. As it is written, there is none righteous no not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they: they are become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips. Whose month is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways and the way of praise have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things the law saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world become guilty before God. Therefore by deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* Truly if the human heart tend to such wickedness when left to itself – if it be so totally destitute of all that is pleasing to God who would not respond the sentiment - *by deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God!* Yet this dreadful and indiscriminate description of the natural heart is again and again repeated in similar terms both in the old and new testaments. It is the testimony of the old testament that *the heart of the sons of men is full of evil and that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.* And the writers of the new testament confirm this unwelcome truth when they say - *The carnal man is enmity against God; for it is not subject to his law neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. I know that in me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.*

Now if this be a faithful accounting of mankind by nature we ask where is there any grounds for the justification of an individual of the race by his own righteousness! His righteousness! The scriptures above recited expressly declare, *that there is none righteous no not one.*

Even granting it possible that the man guilty of one sin could by future obedience obtain pardon and acceptance with God there would still be no hope in our case: for it seems by these texts of scripture just quoted that antecedently to regeneration there is actually nothing in our characters which God regards with complacency. The very first holy exercise we have must be the result of the influence of the Spirit and these would never have been granted to any of us only through the meritorious righteousness of the Savior.

The self righteous man then is holy driven off from his ground. Even if he deny that deep rooted - that universal alienation of our hearts from God which the Scriptures charge upon us one and all still there is no foothold for him. For if he have sinned but once in his whole life he has brought on his head the everlasting curse of a broken law and there must it lie until some arm stronger than a mortals is stretched out to deliver him. The alternative is before him either to believe on the Son and be saved or to believe not in the Son and be damned.

The subject we are discussing is so important my hearers that it has insensibly exhausted too much of our time to permit the discussion of the second part of it in this discourse. In closing this head however permit me to declare one or two inferences.

First the subject shows us how rich free and unmerited was the grace that devised and executed the plan of our Redemption.

*The Lord looked down upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and serve God - they are all gone out of the way - they are together become unprofitable.* And was there anything in such a picture to induce the eternal God to put the universe in motion and share his own Son to save such a rebellious race? Surely there was nothing unless it were our infatuation. We were fighting against God and he will know that we should resist all his offers of mercy and crucify his dearly beloved Son and resist as long as we were able the influence of his Spirit. Yet did this gracious God in the face of this mad rebellion against him develop a stupendous plan for reconciliation and rescue - a plan which excites the admiration of heaven and which demanded infinite wisdom to devise and infinite benevolence and power to execute: O who would not join the apostle in rejoicing *that salvation is wholly by grace through faith and that not of ourselves it is the gift of God! And bring forth the top stone thereof with shoutings crying grace grace unto it.*

Secondly. The subject discussed shows us how pitiable and awful is the state of the sinner who has secured no interest in the righteousness of Christ.

Every such person has broken the law of God and therefore has gone forth against him a sentence from the righteous judicature of heaven consigning him over to the blackness of darkness forever. So long as he continues without faith in Christ not one ray of hope not one promise of mercy can reach him. The two edged sword of a broken law is already thirsting for his blood and the stern aspect of vindictive justice unsoftened by a single shade of compassion meets him in every approach to the Deity. He has no portion beyond this short life but the untold agonies of the pit. The fact that Christ has made a propitiation for the whole world and redeemed us from the curse of the law can make no difference in

his condition so long as he goes about to *establish his own righteousness and neglect to submit to the righteousness of God*. This fact can make no difference in his condition did I say? It does make an awful difference. It swells most fearfully the sinner's guilt and condemnation. Indeed the guilt of neglecting a Saviour is represented as paramount to all other sins. *He that believeth not is condemned already, etc.* And this is the *condemnation that light has come into the world, etc. If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much more, etc. How shall we escape if we neglect, etc.* We shall not escape but indignation and wrath tribulation and anguish will be our portion forever.

Delivered

At Conway June 1822

## Sermon 113 Righteousness of Christ

[Sermon No. 113, "Righteousness of Christ," Jeremiah 23:6, 1822 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 5]

Jeremiah 23:6

*And this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness.*

*[See Sermon 112 for the first half of this series.]*

That distinguished reformer Martin Luther regarded the doctrine of justification by faith alone as the grand test distinguishing a standing from a falling church - that is if a church unequivocally and unreservedly maintained this doctrine that church was *built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*. But if a church rejected this doctrine she had departed from *the faith once delivered to the saints having given heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils* and could not therefore long stand. And indeed when we see how constant are the efforts of all the sacred writers to strip away from man every self righteous prop and to turn his hopes towards the sovereign grace and mercy of God in Christ and especially when we read the constant the laborious the earnest efforts of Paul to establish the drop doctrine of justification by faith alone on an immovable foundation we must regard this as a fundamental doctrine of revelation if there be any thing fundamental in the Gospel. This eminent apostle brings all the resources of his vigorous mind under the particular influence of the Spirit of God to bear with reiterated intensity upon the subject. He seems to have no hope of man until he has driven them off from every resting place of self righteousness and caused them to look to Christ alone. He presents before sinners only the methods in which they can be justified either by works exclusively or by faith exclusively. His motto is *if by grace then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works then it is no more grace; otherwise works is no more works*. After presenting this alternative to the sinner he proceeds with an unsparing hand to show him that the first of these methods of justification that is by works alone is utterly beyond his power and about by his sins he has cut himself off from all hope by works of law. Before his inspired touch the robust fabric of self righteousness vanishes like a dream, when one awakes. Yet he does not leave the sinner here. For he saw that he would endeavor to build up a mixed system of justification in which works should have a share and grace a share. Into this fabric too the apostle enters and like Samson he takes hold of the pillars of it and carries them away and the superstructure tumbles into ruin. He now endeavours to press the sinner to fly to the only remaining refuge the righteousness of Christ. There he exhibits a God beaming mercy and kindly receiving and forgiving the penitent and making him an heir to an eternal inheritance. But in every other spot he exhibits God as a consuming fire taking vengeance on those who will not submit to his method of salvation.

And we consider how extremely tenacious men are of their self righteousness we need not wonder at the earnestness and repetition of the apostle on this point. The sinner will abandon everything else even property ease reputation and even life sooner than his self-confidence. You may reason with him out of the scriptures and convince his understanding beyond a doubt that he cannot be justified by his own righteousness and yet his heart will cling to it. If you drive him from one self-righteous support he will fly to another. He will rest on anything and everything rather than submit to the righteousness of God. How obstinately and perseveringly did Job cling to his own works as a ground of justification until he was

made to see God and then he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes. The young ruler who came to enquire of Christ what good thing he must do to inherit eternal life preferred to lose his soul rather than give up his self-righteousness. The apostle Paul was an eminent example of one who trusted in himself that he was righteous. He has no doubt but he was a child of God and an heir of heaven until he was made to see the strictness and purity of the law of God and his own sinfulness. *I was alive without the law says he but when the commandment came sin survived and I died.* The self-righteous fabric he had been building fell in a moment never to rise and fleeing from its ruins he laid hold on the hope set before him in the Gospel through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. And on account of the immense change in his feelings and condition he was eminently qualified to be the great defender of justification by faith.

But to occupy no more time in these desultory remarks let us come to the subject we began to discuss in the morning. I proposed two questions springing out of the text - the first was why is it necessary Christ should be our righteousness? This has been considered and at least to my mind it was demonstrated that by works of law no flesh living can be justified. But through the righteousness of Christ we can be justified. We are led then to consider the second question - in what sense is Christ our righteousness?

In the first place are marked negatively that Christ's righteousness is not regarded by God as literally our righteousness.

The truth is it is impossible in the very nature of things that either the righteousness or sinfulness of one being should be transferred to another being. I may experience certain benefits from the holiness or suffer from the wickedness of another man: but neither one nor the other of these qualities can become mine so as to render me deserving of reward or punishment on my own account. And these views of the subject are coincident with scripture. Their language is this: *The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the Father neither shall the Father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.* It is evident then that the righteousness of Christ cannot be made an inherent quality of the believer so that shall on that account deserve reward.

In the second place, Christ is not our righteousness in such a sense that we need no inherent personal righteousness of our own.

Our personal righteousness as we have already seen cannot have any efficacy in procuring for us justification first because previous to justification we have none. We have all gone out of the way and none of us is righteous no not one and secondly because if we possessed any righteousness our sins would cut us off from all claim to reward and lay us under sentence of everlasting woe. But it does not follow that personal holiness is unnecessary for us because it is only through Christ's righteousness that we can be justified. For without about personal righteousness we can never have proof that we are justified: Nay the want of this is a conclusive evidence that we remain under condemnation. For whoever is justified bestowed upon him will have also a holy principle implanted within him. These two things are inseparable in the purposes of God and it is infatuation to suppose the one can exist without the other. There have been those in indeed assuming the Christian name who have maintained the deadly sentiment that as Christ by his obedience has fulfilled the moral law in their stead they are released from its obligations and if they only believe in Christ it is not important to enquire whether they keep or violate the commandments. But *O my soul come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly mine honor be not thou united.*

We now proceed to state positively in what sense Christ is our righteousness.

In the first place it is in consequence of his righteousness alone that the believer receives from God the pardon of his sins.

This is the first great step in the article of justification and it is uniformly ascribed to the blood or merits of Christ as its first procuring cause. *The blood of Jesus Christ, says John, cleanses us from all sin. In whom, says Paul, we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.* Christ declares to Paul that the object of calling him to the ministry was *to open the eyes of the Gentiles and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God that they may's receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are fortified by faith that is in me.*

In Paul's address to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch he thus speaks - *Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren that through this man Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.* Peter also addresses the unbelieving rulers of Jerusalem in this decided manner: *The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on the tree; Him half God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.* The Jews indeed when Christ was on earth and forgave the sins of some one explained, *who can forgive sins but God only?* We however who believe that this Saviour who is our righteousness is called Jehovah shall not be perplexed with such a difficulty nor shall we regard him as blaspheming nor persecute him nor take up stones to stone him because he declares God to be his Father. Thereby making himself equal with God.

In the second place Christ's righteousness secures to the believer title to the joys of heaven.

*By his own blood, says Paul, he entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption for us.* He is the mediator of the new testament that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound: but when sin abounded grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life. By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. He that hath the Son hath life. If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life. But not to multiply quotations it is the new song that is sung by the blessed in heaven *worthy art thou to take the book and to open the seal thereof for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by the blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.*

In the third place the righteousness of Christ is the processing cause of the personal righteousness and sanctification of the believer.

It is one of the plainest principles of revelation that without the influences of God's Holy Spirit men would remain dead in trespasses and sins and though they have ears they would not hear and though they have eyes they would not see but go on stupid and unconcerned to the judgment. It is another principle equally plain that had not Christ magnified the law and made it honorable by his obedience and sufferings God's Spirit would never have been poured out on our apostate world - *I tell you the truth, says Christ, it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you.* He came unto his own says John and his own received him not. But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God even to them

*that believe on his name which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God. Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his manner he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Who (Christ) gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. What know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you which ye have of God and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price. The love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost.*

The sanctification of the believer is also in scripture attributed to the same Spirit given as a reward to the righteousness of Christ. *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Jesus Christ - who unto us of God is become wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all one wherefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren.*

These are the most important respects in which Christ is our righteousness. They comprehend indeed the beginning and the end of the means of salvation. Had not Christ wrought out a perfect righteousness never could the sins of the apostate man be forgiven, never could a title have been given to the joys of heaven but the flaming sword of a broken law would have turned every way to guard that holy place from the polluted tread of sinful man - never would an individual of the race have been awakened from the slumber of spiritual death but enmity to God would have steeled the heart of every descendent of Adam in a stubborn and increasing defiance of its Maker. That many are forgiven converted sanctified and glorified is the result altogether of the righteousness of Christ. Man's native holiness - man's acquired holiness have had no influence whatever in processing these blessings. The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's blood taken in its fullest extent and viewed in its connections unfolds a system of love and wisdom calculated to excite our gratitude our appreciation and our love. Having thus amply established and explained this doctrine permit me to close with a few inferences.

#### 1. The subject is calculated to humble us.

To make those he addresses feel this inference seems to have been an important object of Paul in urging upon them this doctrine. After having uttered those memorable words *being justified freely by his grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus*, and he asks, *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. If him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that according as it is written he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.* Until we are brought to feel that justification is entirely by grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus we shall inevitably be led to boast. And indeed the man who believes that he is justified partly by his works and partly by faith has reason to boast and to glory in those works so far as they avail to his justification. This single fact one would approve one suppose were enough to show that this mixed system of justification is erroneous.

Secondly. The subject discussed presents the most powerful motives to the justified believer to be diligent in the performance of good works.

Such an one is justified from all things which the law lays to his charge. What a debt of gratitude then is imposed upon him and how can he neglect to strive to the utmost to keep the commandments! If the love of God indeed be within him he cannot have a more powerful appeal presented to him. It was this



which roused up apostles and martyrs to be willing to be killed all the day long and to be accounted asleep for the slaughter and to regard themselves notwithstanding as more than conquerors through him that loved them and died for them.

Yet it is frequently objected against this doctrine of gratuitous justification that it tends to make men neglect their duty: because their best deeds can be of no avail in the sight of God. This objection just shows on what motives those act who make it. They are altogether selfish. They feel as if there could be no motive to the performance of good deeds unless they can thereby purchase heaven. Were such renewed in their minds they would find such selfish feelings not to be half as powerful and impelling to good works as a sense of the debt of gratitude the believer owes to his Saviour. Indeed it is to men who believe the doctrine of gratuitous justification that we are to look for the most active and disinterested benevolences and experience shows that such are the men who exhibit most.

Thirdly. The subject discussed presents us with an argument in favor of the final perseverance of all real Christians.

The argument is this. The terms in which the doctrine of justification are expressed imply in the plainest manner that every genuine believer in Christ is immediately justified. *Ye are washed ye are sanctified - ye are justified*, says he. Now only grant this and we are expressly told that whom God *foreknew he predestinated and justified and glorified*. That is certainly all who are justified will be glorified in heaven. There is no mode of evading this argument except by denying that men are ever justified in this world - a supposition that seems inconsistent with many express declarations of the bible.

In the last place this subject shows on how firm a rock the Christian's hope rests and how much cause he has for triumphant exultation.

Paul after having gone through with this subject in a number of chapters terminates the discussion by one of the most encouraging and animating conclusions that ever fell from the lips of a mortal. With a part of this appeal which occupies the whole of the eighth chapter of Romans we conclude - *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. And we know that all things work together for good and them that love God to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the first born among many brethren* - (and so on to the end of the chapter)

Delivered

At Conway June 1822

At Conway July 1825

## Sermon 114 Advantages of Charity

[Sermon No. 114, "Advantages of Charity," Proverbs 11:25, 1822 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 5]

Proverbs 11:25

*The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.*

In almost every part of the material creation we discover in active operation the principle of reciprocation. The streams of water all empty into the ocean and the ocean in return sends up the vapors to form those clouds that supply the rivers. From the clouds descend those rains that fertilize the earth and the very process of vegetation that is set in motion by this rain produces those vapours mount up to heaven and form the clouds. The leaves of plants and trees are produced from the soil and then when decayed descend to the earth and fertilize it anew. The sun shines on the planets and the planets reflect back light upon the sun. The sun attracts the planets and the planets the sun and thus are their relative situations and proper motions presented.

But the system of reciprocation is not limited to the physical creation. It extends also to the moral world. All beings in the universe that are holy render to each other a mutual return of love. God loves these beings and the stronger the evidences of this to their minds the more warmly will their affections flow toward him. And the more ardently one being loves another the more intensely will that attachment be returned: so that in this case the latter part of the text (which in fact contains the same though as the former part) is fulfilled *he that watereth it shall be watered himself.*

The text however in its connexion was limited to a single case of reciprocation. It refers to acts of beneficence or charity and is confined to that branch of charity which consists in relieving the wants of our fellow man by the bestowment of a portion of our property as appears from the context. In this limited sense I shall employ it on this occasion. And I shall endeavor to show that the man who devotes a part of his time and money for the amelioration of the temporal or spiritual condition of his fellow man receives more than adequate return of benefits so that in the figurative language of scripture he is *made fat* - I do not expect my friends on this subject to elicit anything new to interest you. But perhaps it may be profitable at this time, *to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance.*

*Whether the charitable man will be more than repaid for his deeds of beneficence will depend on the promises of God.*

Let a few of these therefore be repeated. The text and content is one. *There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor. Thou shalt surely give him and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest him because that for the thing the Lord shall bless thee in all thy works. Do good and lend hoping for nothing again and your reward shall be great and ye shall be the children of the Highest. Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly – and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Blessed*

*is he that considereth the poor. The Lord shall deliver him in time of trouble.*

Here we perceive promises made to the liberal soul. The temporal and spiritual blessings - blessings of time and blessings of eternity - blessings of soul and blessings of body. And we *know that God is not man that he should lie: neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?* Unquestionably these promises God will fulfill up to the very last iota. Although it may seem paradoxical to us to say that to give away our property tends to increase our property yet after all it may be true that the Providence of God has so ordered events that such shall be the ultimate effect of charity. At any rate he who directs all things in heaven and in earth is all so to dispose circumstances that the liberal soul shall find temporal and spiritual prosperity attending it as a reward for its beneficence. Let us examine some of the modes in which charity tends in its own nature to produce this effect.

In the first place a liberal charity to the wants of our fellow men tends to render a man more industrious and frugal.

Most men waste a large portion of their time - some of us in sleep - someone in unprofitable conversation and some in pursuing their business in a dilatory unenergetick manner. Most of us could do more to increase our property or improve our minds many of us could do much more than we actually perform. Now charity evidently tends to furnish the requisite stimulus to extra exertion. For we draw we know that we have reduced thereby our stock of property and few of us are there who are so little fond of our money as not to wish to have the deficiency made up. And besides one deed of charity begets the desire to perform a second and here too is a powerful motive to increase our industry that we may obtain the means.

There are few of us also who do not indulge in some businesses with which we might dispense without injury to soul or body. And the same principle that operates to render us more industrious will tend to make cut out every needless article of expense. In these two modes does charity return with a temporal blessing upon our own heads - so that leaving out of the account altogether the idea that God peculiarly be prospers the liberal soul, it is probable that in most cases charity tends to increase rather than to decrease a man's property. As this effort of liberality however is silent and gradual and unnoticed a man's temporal prosperity is perhaps never imputed to this cause when it might have been the spring of his industrious habits and the secret of this thrift.

In the second place liberal charity when sincerely and unostentatiously performed procures for a man the gratitude of those he relieves and the respect of a virtuous part of society.

To procure this good opinion of men should not indeed be the grand motive for beneficence but still *a good man is rather to be chosen than great riches and loving favour rather than silver and gold.* And I see not therefore why it may not be among the motives that influence us to support charitable institutions. At any rate if this does not operate upon us in the least in the bestowing our goods just to feed the spiritual or temporal poor, it is still one of the almost inevitable consequences of charity and may therefore be considered as one of its rewards and if it be then as Solomon says that this is rather to be chosen than great riches surely it is more than an equivalent for the small sums we bestow in charity.

In the third place the liberal soul has a fairer prospect than parsimonious souls of receiving the charitable assistance of his fellow men should he ever be reduced to want.

This is too evident to demand proof or illustration. Men almost universally are inclined to let a man feel at least some of the effects of his niggardliness: and indeed their hearts and hands never will open so freely nor so widely to believe such a man as one of a contrary character: although it may be questioned whether this feeling or rather want of feeling is not contrary to the Gospel. But we know that our hearts are naturally contrary to the Gospel and we are here speaking of things as they are and not as they should be.

In the next place the charitable man is amply rewarded by those benevolent feelings that result from his excesses of beneficence.

Selfishness is by nature the governing principle of our natures. We see this in the child that has not arrived at years of moral discernment. The heart is bent wholly bent upon gratifying its own desires whatever may be the consequences. This disposition continues to get firmer and firmer hold of us as we grow up if we are not renewed and although its undisguised deformity as it manifests itself in children is hidden and modified by the customs of society yet it is still under all its counterfeit forms selfishness. But there is not a greater enemy to our happiness in the universe than this. The more therefore it is subdued within us and the stronger the principle of benevolence becomes within us so much will our real happiness be increased. Now a man may be liberal and generous in providing for the necessities and conveniences and luxuries for his family and near relatives who yet has not one particle of that liberality mentioned in the text. It is not till his heart begins to feel that all members are his brethren - it is not till the miseries of the remote stranger and the heathen begin to touch his heart and expand his sympathies. It is not till he actually finds his hands opening and contributing to their relief that he feels anything of that expensive benevolence which maketh the soul fat and which when it waters others finds itself watered. It is when a man's benevolence is thus enlarged that he begins to resemble God. And just in proportion as our likeness to God increases will our happiness increase. The man of this universal benevolence who realizes that mankind are about one mighty brotherhood mutually bound to impart assistance to one another experiences in his soul a richness and extent of happiness and comfort to which the man of avaricious parsimonious disposition is a total stranger. If the latter derives any satisfaction from the idea of being rich and of having and holding his possessions to him and his heirs *sine fine* it is a contracted a sordid kind of satisfaction. It is an easy matter for a man who loves his money better than he loves mankind to find a thousand excuses for denying his charities in aid of the benevolent institutions of the present day. He may believe that they are all ill conducted or that the time for such exertions is not yet come or that the calls of his family forbid him to cooperate - and these objections may afford him a kind of covering against all benevolent applications. But at the same time his conscience does not rest easy. His soul is confined to too small a compass to satisfy an immortal mind. His noble powers cannot bear to be frozen up in such contracted selfishness and often conscience will whisper in his ear and disturb his comfort that his neglect to contribute does not result from any real objections there are to the plans of benevolence now in operation but because he loves his money too well to love mankind.

But on the other hand the liberal soul finds a heartfelt satisfaction springing up within him when he casts in his portion into the treasury of the Lord. He feels that secret consolation which results from an approving conscience. His soul has room to enlarge herself and her rich and benevolent feelings range over the whole world and embrace the whole human family - and the wish for the happiness of all that follows the charitable deed diffuses a calm satisfaction through the bosom akin to that which moves the Redeemer to undertake the rescue of man from the ruins of the fall.

Such are some of the benefits in this world that return as the effect of benevolent deeds to bless the

liberal soul. But what shall I say of those the man whom charities are performed from right motives will receive in another world? Among these it may be mentioned that many an object of his beneficence will rise up and call him blessed and salute him as the instrument of bringing him to glory. There too will he emphatically find the promise of God fulfilled in the flowing in upon his soul of the river of life and consolation and happiness. By this will his soul - his every faculty - be filled to overflowing as a rich reward for all his exertions on earth. This final fullness of joy - these pleasures forevermore has God promised through his Son to *whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple*. And though *heaven and earth pass away his words shall not pass away*.

My hearers if such be the tendencies of charity in this world - if such be its reward in heaven, who must not acknowledge that the bestowment of a portion of our money to supply the spiritual or temporal wants of a perishing world instead of impoverishing makes rich - doubly rich - especially that no soul is made fat - and that the streams of benevolence that flow from us return enlarged and purified to water our souls again? If such be the results of charity who would not pity the man that lives without exercising it with his heart frozen up in the narrow and dark dungeon of selfishness! And, finally, if such be the tendency of charity, why need I search on this occasion for further motives to encourage the hearts and strengthen the hands of the members of the respectable societies convened before me. It is true the motives to charity I have this day presented before you are in some sense selfish - though it is a selfishness very different from that which we possess by nature - nay it is in opposition to this. It is selfishness which seeks the purification of the soul and which longs to have it resemble God. It is a selfishness which animated Christ *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despised the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*. In short it is a selfishness which tends to eradicate selfishness and which it is difficult to suppose can have any existence in any heart that does not love God and feel desirous to promote his glory and therefore do we earnestly wish to see this kind of selfishness increase and prevailing in any more hearts. For in this case *self love and social are the same*. We hope to see it increasing in the members of these societies and we feel confident we shall also see increasing in their hearts love to God and a love to man. Let us remember my brethren that if we are faithful to the injunctions of the constitutions of our societies we have the promise of the Almighty God who cannot lie that we shall be blessed in time and blessed in eternity. Let us therefore resolve in the strength of the Lord that we will not be moved from our charitable purposes - neither by the ignoble feelings or example of an ungodly world nor by the stupidity and remissness of our hearts. The objects of our societies are not limited to our connexions to our townsmen to our countrymen but they extend I believe to every object of misery whether he wants be spiritual or temporal through the earth. They are not bounded by the narrow limits of a day or year or by the duration of the universe. They reach into eternity. They reach through eternity. Probably these societies have already decided the everlasting fate of one or more immortal souls. The destiny of many more in the divine purposes be depending on these exertions. Some brethren may be now standing ready to embrace the Gospel and almost within the sound of it - a few dollars only being wanting to carry it to him. And our charities perhaps if they be continued may convey it to him and he be made an heir of glory - but if they be withheld and these societies perish he may never come within the reach of salvation but live without God and die without hope. Let us then keep one eye fixed upon the miseries of this dying world and the other looking on the promises of God and we shall find our hearts waxing stronger and stronger in the good works and our hands opening wider and wider until we shall be called to the reward of our labours.

Delivered

At Conway May 30 1822 Before Charitable Societies

## Sermon 116 Forsaking the Camp of the World for Christ

[Sermon No. 116, "Forsaking the Camp of the World for Christ," Hebrews 13:13, 1822 Aug, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 5]

Hebrews 13:13

*Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*

The person to whom we are here exhorted to go is Christ on the cross. Mount Calvary where he suffered was without the gates of Jerusalem and the apostle informs us that there was something appropriate in this circumstance because thereby the sacrifice of Christ was offered up as were the various animals under the Levitical priesthood. *The bodies of those beast, says he, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach.*

In the circumstance of Christ's suffering without the camp several things are implied. First. It signified that his gospel would bring men out of the observances of the Jewish legal ceremonies into the worship of God in spirit and in truth. 2. It signified that the Jews regarded him as an accursed thing not fit even to die in the city. And 3 it signified that his followers must come out from this world and be separate bearing his reproach.

In this latter signification I shall regard the text at this time. By the camp I shall understand the world at large although no doubt it had a special reference to the Jewish site and legal ceremonies and prejudices in which that people were and still are entrenched as with ramparts. And I shall consider

1. The nature of the camp.
2. The kind of reproach those may expect who go out of it.
3. The motives for abandoning it.

The first circumstance to be noticed in regard to the camp of the world is that it is made up of those who have rebelled against God and who have taken up arms to fight against him.

In the scriptures only two empires are described among men - the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness - the empire of Christ and the empire of Satan. Originally all of us belong to the dominion of the latter: *God looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that they did understand and seek God. They are all gone out of the way. There is none that doeth good no not one.* Over the whole face of the earth from the rising to the setting sun God saw nothing but an universal revolt and rebellion - not even one maintaining his cause and doing his will but *they were all gone out of the way.* Yet he resolved to establish his kingdom even in such an alienated spot - and sending his own son into the world *to as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name. Which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.* And in the days of the apostles they testified that another kingdom then existed on earth opposed to the empire of Satan. *We know, says John, that we are of God and the whole world lieth*

*in wickedness. And you, says Paul to the Ephesians, hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins wherein in time past he walked according to the course of this world. But ye are a chosen generation, says Peter to the Christians whom he addressed, a royal priesthood an holy nation a peculiar people that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in times past were not a people but are now the people of God which had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

It appears from this passage that all who are not chosen out of the world still belong to it and in the language of scripture all who have not gone forth unto Christ without the camp bearing his reproach are denominated by way of emphasis and distinction the world. And that these are the enemies of God encamped as it were against him appears from the express declarations of scripture. We are told by Paul that *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*. To the Romans he says, *if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son*. And if this term world apply to the Christians in Rome it would apply equally well to the whole world - to the Ephesians and he says, *we were by nature the children of wrath even as others*. And who are others unless it be all men? *Know ye not, says James, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God - whosoever therefore will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God*. But how could this be unless the character of the world were enmity against God? Said Christ to his disciples, *If ye were of the world the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world but I have chosen you out of the world therefore the world hateth you. If the world hate ye know that it hated me before it hated you. He that hateth me hateth my Father also*.

A second fact important to be noticed is that the Prince of darkness is the ruler and Captain of the camp out of which we are exhorted to flee.

Paul charges the Ephesians with having formerly *walked according to the course of this world* - and what is the course of this world? He immediately adds according to the Prince of the powers of the air the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. It appears then that the general course of the world is in conformity to the will of Satan. And in another place the same Apostle expressly denominates Satan the God of this world meaning thereby if language means anything that he is worshipped and served by the world. He it is who rules in the camp of the world and he is the author of those attempts wicked men have made to subvert the Gospel. There are only instruments in his hands led captive by him at his will. *Ye are of your Father the Devil, says Christ to the ungodly Jews, and the lusts of your Father ye will do*.

A third circumstance in regard to the camp of this world which is pitched in warfare with God, is that those who have taken up arms within it will not receive any ambassadors from Him to propose terms of peace.

God has selected two of the most exalted and glorious characters the universe could furnish and sent them to the world on an embassy fully empowered to make reconciliation. But the obstinate those rebels who have named the standard of revolt have hoisted the bloody flag and refused to receive these messages. Does this statement seem exaggerated? Let us turn to the inspired word. *God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life. But he was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not. He came to his own and his own received him not. He is despised and rejected of men a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised and we esteemed him not*.

Nor was the mission of the Holy Spirit the second ambassador better received. Says Christ was disciples, *I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive.* And as it was said of the Jews so is it true of all unregenerate men, *they do always resist the Holy Ghost.*

The faithful ministers of Christ are also styled ambassadors from heaven being proposals of praise to a rebellious world. Now then says Paul, *We are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.* Yet without the all powerful influences of the Spirit to accompany their proposals they would in no instance be received. And the most successful minister has always had occasion to say, *Paul may plant and Appollos water but God giveth the increase.*

The last fact I shall mention in regard to the camp of this world is that those who have taken up arms within its ramparts are acting under the influence of a strong delusion.

Although the evidence of their hostility to God is clear as noon day yet they do not know that they are his enemies and will resent the charge. Even at the moment they are buckling on the armor and brandishing the sword and hurling the darts of rebellion against God they declare themselves to be his friends. And when they are led captive by Satan at his will they do not suspect themselves to be under his influence at all. Though they have eyes they see not and though they have ears they hear not. *In whom the God of this world hath blindeth the mind of them which believe not let the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them.* In the book of Revelation that old serpent called the devil and Satan is deceiving the whole world. Yet so crafty are his wiles and so delusive his influence that the world are ignorant of his devices and led along blindfolded down the steep road of destruction.

Having given some characteristics of the camp of this world out of which Paul entreats us to flee to Christ bearing his reproach I proceed secondly to enquire in what that reproach consist.

If we escape from the world and go to Christ the world regard it as desertion. And indeed it is so - it is deserting the ranks of Satan and fleeing to the banner of Christ. But although it be most honorable yet the enemies of God are mortified and chagrined that they have lost a companion and they will pursue him with reproach. Deserters from an army are always regarded as proper subjects of pursuit and severe chastisement and even of death. Death also was inflicted on those who abandoned the ranks of Satan. The apostles suffered death and the kings of the earth have been drunk with the blood of the saints. But in these happier days little else is to [be] feared than the reproach of the tongue. And as the soldiers in a camp of fire most rapidly upon a deserter who is yet within the rank of their armies so when the enemies of God perceive one of their number quitting their ranks and flying without the camp they pour forth upon him most thickly the darts of reproach. That is to drop the figure a man who is recently converted is most exposed to be evil spoken of and hated by the world than one who has long been a follower of Christ. And as in an army the officers and soldiers are severe towards deserters when the number greatly increases so the world pour forth more bitter reproaches against converts in time of a revival than in a time of stupidity because at the former season they apprehend their cause is losing ground and the deserters of so many of their companions around them distrusts their consciences and makes them clarify the goodness of their cause.

But what are the particular reproaches (the enemies of God pour forth) that come forth from the camp of the world against that man who quits the camp of the world and goes to Christ without the gate.



In the first place he is said to be frightened. It is regarded by the world an evidence of cowardice that an unrenewed man feels alarmed when he reads the express declaration of God that except he repent he shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. If a man trembles when he finds that an omnipotent God is angry with him every day and is just ready to rise against him clothed in vengeance, this is looked upon as an indicator of cowardice unworthy the character of a man of respectability in the world. This is one article of reproach.

A second is that he is a weak man. Whatever may have been his reputation for talents and strength of intellect the moment a man begins to be anxious for his soul and to talk of being born again and going to Christ he is looked upon as discovering great imbecility of mind. It is said of him that were his views more enlarged he would never have embraced such unfounded notions which so many philosophers and great men have rejected as puerile. And as men are naturally proud of their abilities probably this reproach is one of the most difficult to be borne.

Another reproach is that the man is deluded.

It always has been and still is and ever will be the fact that the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man. The man therefore under the influence of God's Spirit will appear to such an one to have embraced a system of error and he knows not how to account for the great change in his views and feelings and conduct except to call it delusion. Indeed unless this natural man can persuade himself that the new convert is deluded it will follow that he himself is deluded. For if the convert be right this man is utterly wrong since there is a world of differences between them. But all men had rather blame others deluded than themselves. Never it is we hear so much about the delusions of new converts.

Another reproach the follower of Christ may expect if he live godly is that he is an enthusiast.

When the unregenerate see him following Christ resolutely and closely through good report and evil report they cannot conceive any thing but enthusiasm should attach him to a course in which they see nothing to love. To them Christ *has no form nor comeliness and when they see him there is no beauty that they should desire him*. To them the Cross is a stumbling block or foolishness and hence they conclude the man whose heart is warm in service of his lord and Master must be guided by an overheated zeal.

Such a man too must expect to be reproached as uncharitable censorious and bigoted. And why? Because he does not hesitate to tell unregenerate men that they must be born again or they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven - and that their present course will lead them into the pit of perdition. And when he separates himself from the frailties of the unregenerate world and leaves them to go alone to destruction they not only call him a bigot but a persecutor who sets himself up as holier than others and intends to force them to adopt his creed and his habits.

On the same ground the Christian will be reproached as a melancholy misanthrope - unfriendly to the innocent amusements of the world and as making religion a gloomy forbidding thing. Men who have not religion have no more idea (very faint conceptions) of the pleasures derived from religious meditation prayer and profess them the deaf having the pleasure of hearing musick. Hence if the Christian will not join in the pursuit of worldly pleasure with as much eagerness as ever they regard him as melancholy and gloomy. *Wherein, says Peter, they think it strange that you are not with them to the same excess of not speaking evil of you.* And he adds, *this alarming thought - who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.*

Another approach the follower of Christ may expect is a charge of hypocrisy. When such an one abandons the camp of the enemy the world will say let us wait a few years and we shall see this man returning again to our society. He is taking this course now to deceive others - the cloven foot will soon appear (the mask will soon drop) and his professed zeal in religion will be succeeded by ridicule of Christ. Unfortunately such prophecies sometimes prove true - but in nine cases out of ten they prove false. Yet the world takes more notice of one case of apostasy than of nine cases of perseverance.

Such are some of the reproaches the follower of Christ is exposed to. And the consequences of them is sometimes the destruction of worldly reputation the loss of friends and the loss of means of temporal support. But in the third place it seems as if it could present motives enough to persuade you my hearers to abandon the camp of God's enemies notwithstanding these light afflictions which if they come upon us are but for a moment and are calculated also to work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Some of these motives will apply particularly to those real friends of Christ who are yet lingering in the camp of the world not quite ready to bear the reproaches of Christ not quite ready to go to him on Calvary and there be made a mark for the arrows of the ungodly.

In the first place the friend of Christ is urged to come out of the camp of his enemies because if he continues there he is in danger of losing his attachment to his Saviour and becoming ashamed to bear his reproach.

We are all saints and sinner mutative beings. Let us live year after year in contact with those of sentiments feelings and practices ever so opposite to our own we shall find our repugnance gradually waning away and our characters ere long will become assimilated to theirs. Thus the Christian who is surrounded by enemies of Christ first finds his love to the Saviour cooling - then it degenerates into positive neglect of him and it would finally unless God interpose be totally lost and the man be left to irretrievable apostasy. And this suggest another consideration. The Christian who remains in the camp of God's enemies has no reason to expect - he has no promise of that assistance God has vouchsafed to all those who stand by the cross of Christ bearing his reproach. The Lord has promised indeed to protect and defend his real children - but the promise is made only to those who have forsaken the camp of his enemies. *Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the of the living God: as God hath said and will dwell in them and walk them and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty.*

The second motive urging the friend of Christ to escape from the camp of the ungodly is that he is often compelled to lend his influence against the cause of his Lord and Master.

His name is enrolled among the enemies of God and until he has publicly gone forth and given it to Christ he is regarded as one of the number and numerically at least he is reckoned as on their side.

Such an one may however say that he takes or decides a stand on the Lord's side that the world can derive no encouragement from his example.

But there is a season that frequently comes which in conformity with the figure used in the text may be

called the review day when he is compelled to act against Christ. It is that day when all the friends of Christ are called upon to take their places in his ranks and in which his enemies range themselves in opposing ranks. Every man is forced to stand in the one side or the other. There is no neutral ground. He that is not for Christ is regarded as against him. But from the very nature of the case this man must appear in the ranks opposed to Christ. For to drop the figure we refer to the season of communion.

In the third place to urge the Christian to escape from the camp of of the world I point him to yonder hill of Calvary where his Saviour is suffering and bleeding.

Christ and his cause are identified. If the one suffers the other suffers. If one is attacked the other is attacked. Look then at your Saviour and his little band of followers and see with what fury their enemies are pouring in upon them on every side. See infidelity with his massive engines battering the fortress of the Gospel. See scepticism planting his mines underneath the walls and already lighting the torch to explode them. See persecution urging on her mad way brandishing and scattering her firebrands with her right hand and with her left drinking the blood of the saints. See Mammon with his companions pressing on in a firm unyielding phalanx and hurling their spears against the Saviour and his band. See lust and revenge and with them countless myriads darkening the air by a cloud of darts aimed at Calvary. See how they plant a new crown of thorns on the head of your Redeemer. See them stretching him again upon the cross piercing anew his hands with nails and his side with their spears. See how they walk mock insult and spit upon him and offer him gall and vinegar to drink. See how his little band of followers pace and stagger amid the onsets of their enemies. And can you the professed friend of this Jesus look on with indifference! Can you saved from hell and raised to heaven by that Saviour can you remain in the camp of his enemies and neglect to buckle on the armour of the Gospel and go up to the help of the Lord against the mighty!

Finally let us all be urged to escape from the camp of an ungodly world because those who remain in it will erelong be buried in everlasting ruin.

The contest is between God and man - that is between omnipotence and impotence - between omniscience and ignorance - between perfect justice and aggravated guilt. We know therefore who must finally be conqueror. And that sinners have been spared so long is not because God was not able to overcome them nor because they did not deserve destruction. Long have the thunderbolts of divine vengeance been struggling to get vent. But infinite mercy has restrained them. Long since has the sword of justice been raised over the sinner's head but forbearing mercy has held back the almighty arm. But mercy will erelong be exhausted and then all the artillery of heaven will pour its fury upon the camp of this wicked world. *Saith the Lord the Lord of hosts the highest one of Israel. Ah I will ease me of mine adversaries and avenge me of mine enemies. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together and they that shall forsake the Lord shall be consumed. And the throng shall be as long and the making of it is a spark and they shall both burn together and none shall quench them. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven taking vengeance on them that knows not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I will tread them in mine anger says Christ and trample them in my fury and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments and I will stain all my raiments. For the day of vengeance is in my heart and the year of my redeemer is come. O my fellow sinners let us escape from this devoted camp before this day of vengeance come. Let us escape for our lives nor stay in all the plain but flea to the mountain lest we become...*

Delivered

At Conway August 1822

At Conway August 1831

At New Haven September 1822

At Amherst College June 1828

At Deerfield September 1836

## Sermon 117 Grades of Apostasy

[Sermon No. 117, "Grades of Apostasy," Matthew 26:58, 1822 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 6]

Matthew 26:58

*But Peter followed him afar off.*

*[The insert on pages 7-8 has been placed at the asterisk on page 8.]*

The text points us to that distressing hour when the disciples of Jesus *all forsook him and fled* - and when his enemies have laid hold on him and led him away prisoner to the palace of the high priest. Peter however followed them at a distance that he might observe the vigil without endangering his own safety. But why this timidity in that disciple who had declared to Christ only a few hours before though I should *die with thee yet will I not deny thee*? Is this the man who had just drawn his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus one of those who came forth to seize Jesus? Why does he now abandon his Lord and Master in the hour of his utmost need when an infuriated rabble was dragging him away to a more furious judge? Does he believe that Master to have bestowed on him life everlasting and yet is he ashamed to acknowledge that he is his disciple and to stand by him in this trying moment? Does he an heir to eternal glory fear that he shall share the fate of his Master and go with him to heaven? Alas for poor weak human nature! How inefficient are its noblest resolutions! How utterly unable without divine assistance to perform the easiest of them!

But was not Peter sensible of his ingratitude in thus following his Lord at a distance in this hour of peril! No: he thought only of his own safety - his fearing those who could only kill the body overcame his fear of Him who was able to destroy both soul and body in hell. It was not till after he had thrice denied even that he knew his Master - it was not till the Lord turned to look upon Peter that he came to himself and repented and wept bitterly.

Christian brethren are not some of us following Christ far off like Peter and yet like him are ignorant of the distance between us and our Saviour! Permit me this morning to call your attention to this point and present before you some of those marks by which we may know whether we are in a backslidden state. In other words let me hold before you those exercises and actions of the Christian which show religion to be declining in his heart or that he has widely apostatized.

The first evidence of a departure from God is an increasing neglect of the closet of the Scriptures of self-examination and ejaculatory prayer.

Prayer is the channel through which this Christian receives his spiritual food from heaven. If he neglect this therefore leanness and poverty will be his portion. Accordingly we find I believe that all apostasies begin in the closet. A man cannot daily kneel alone before God and earnestly pray upon him without experiencing an effect on his mind as well at least often turn his thoughts solemnly upon religion and upon his own condition. While he is daily in the habit of sincerely and fervently invoking the assistance of God's Spirit to keep him from temptation Satan knows that he cannot get the advantage of him - and therefore his first effort is to make the Christian's closet an undesirable and an unfrequented place. And

if he can see can succeed in this attempt he has gained one most important step towards attaining his end. If he can succeed in disrupting a man out of his closet in the morning he feels sure of entangling him in the business of the day in some temptation. The man who has earnestly implored the divine protection and assistance in the morning will in the midst of business be often turning his thoughts to the subject of religion during the day - and the Adversary dare not assault the shield of faith with which he knows such a man will be able to quench all his fiery darts.

To neglect secret prayer - earnest fervent secret prayer - opens the door for the neglect of God's work. For such a man will not be pleased to read there the command to pray without ceasing while he knows that he scarcely prays at all. (For this is what I mean by closet duties - not merely the repetition of some stereotyped form of prayer which even some very wicked men are careful to use morning and evening.) To get rid therefore of the reproof of conscience he will neglect to read the scriptures with self-application. Now will such a man be very fond of enquiring into the state of his heart daily: for his neglect of prayer will immediately rise before him and conscience will do its office for his omission. This too he will therefore be inclined to neglect. Ejaculatory prayer also will share the same fate. If closet duties be neglected the man will have no habitual sense of the presence of God in and therefore will not as the faithful fervent Christian does be putting up short mental petitions during the day wherever he may be. (Perhaps the person whose closet begins to be an unfrequented place may continue prayer in his family but his actions there also will be merely an unfeeling separation of certain accustomed words - and not that fervent effectual prayer which availeth much.)

Thus brethren is it made evident that if we begin to make ourselves strangers to our closets we do in fact open the door of our hearts to the enemy and depend upon it he always comes in like a flood and ere we are aware of it every obstacle that stands opposed to him in our hearts will be leveled in the dust and we shall be subjected to his dominion. Certainly that commander who in a fort is closely besieged by a powerful enemy could not inform expose himself more were he to throw open every gate of his garrison than does the Christian when he abandons his closet. And as it is almost certain that a besieged fort will be taken when its defenders begin to be remiss in their watchfulness so equally certain is it that he will be made a captive of Satan who is remiss in prayer. This is the first downward step the declining Christian takes and if he takes this rarely does he stop till he has descended several others. Let us then brethren ask ourselves as in the fear of God whether we have not taken this step and whether our closets are not less frequented than formerly.

The second thing that indicates a declension of religion is a decreasing relish for religious conversation upon personal piety.

It is generally regarded as evidence that a man is indifferent to any worldly subject if he seems to take little interest in commenting upon it. And there is no reason why the same conclusion should not be applied to religion. Especially if ever a man at one time much bent upon introducing this subject into conversation and at another time averse to it inclining to discourse upon every thing else in preference, we have reason to conclude that the interest he once took in it has subsided. And when the Christian finds worldly conversation more agreeable to him than that upon practical religion has he not every reason to conclude that the world is uppermost in his mind and that he has that friendship of the world which is enmity with God? The Christian who is growing daily in grace feels pleasure with the most searching discourse (conversation) upon vital godliness because it probes his heart and makes him examine more thoroughly his hope. The backslider on the contrary dreads such conversation for the same reason. He knows that in his present state his hope will not bear examination. He is more fond therefore of conversation (with a decent respectable man of the world) upon worldly concerns than

with a devoted Christian upon the reason of the hope that is in him. And even when he meets his brethren and he will evidently take less interest in enquiring for religious news than for that wholly secular.

A third evidence of a declension of religion in the heart of the Christian is a decreasing anxiety for impenitent sinners.

When a man lies near to God in the lively exercise of faith and prayer he will deeply realize the desperate condition of those who are living without God and without hope. When he meets with such, however amiable their external deportment, the first thought that occurs to him and it is a most distressing thought is that they are children of wrath and under the condemnation of eternal death. And he cannot avoid looking forward only a few years to the time when if they repent not they will take up their abode in the regions of weeping and wailing. It distresses him too more than anything else that they are totally insensible to their condition and will not believe it. But little of this is felt by the apostatizing (backslidden) Christian. He has no great distress even on account of his impenitent children if he has any. He will say to them indeed that it is important that they should become religious but he will not realize that there is a difference between them and Christians as great as between eternal torments and eternal glory. And all because religion is so low in his own heart and (all) his pious feelings are blunted and he has no adequate conception either of the pains of hell or the joys of heaven.

A consequence of this want of sensibility to the condition of the impenitent is that the backslidden (unrenewed) Christian will neglect to warn and exhort such. Or if he should say any thing to his children and domestics he will say it in such a manner that the unregenerate person will see that he does not feel what he says and therefore it will have no abiding effect - certainly no good effect. And he will not pray earnestly for God's Spirit to accompany his exhortations.

And now my Christian brethren where is the difficulty of determining whether we have in our heart a distressing anxiety for impenitent sinners or not. (Can we not determine whether we deeply realize their lost and dreadful situation - and whether we are led daily to pray for them in our closets?). If not is it not good evidence of a low state of religion in our hearts - nay ought not the fact to arouse us to enquire whether we be not ourselves in this gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. Can a man who has escaped the shipwreck ever forget the horrors of it? Can he ever feel indifferent when he sees others exposed to the same calamity? Surely not. Can the man who has escaped the shipwreck of the soul ever forget the danger he has escaped? Or feel unconcerned for others who are hovering about the very same rocks of ruin - driven on by the boisterous winds of passion blinded by the mists of prejudice and sin and without rudder or compass to guide them? Surely the man who does forget all this and feel unconcerned for the fate of others ought seriously to enquire whether he be not still among the number who are driving headlong and blindfold upon the rocks of ruin.

In the fourth place the apostatizing (backsliding) Christian neglects on very trifling accounts the public and social worship of God.

It was the manner of some to forsake the assembling of themselves together in primitive times and the apostle censures them. Indeed it always has been the case that devoted Christians have been delighted with public worship. David has correctly described their feelings in giving his own. *How amiable are the tabernacles O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house they will be still praising thee. They go from strength to strength. Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. For a day in the*

*courts is better than a thousand. I rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. One thing have I desired of the Lord that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life and behold the beauty of the Lord and enquire in his tabernacle.*

But the apostatizing (backsliding) Christian responds only a feeble amen to these sentiments. Though he does not wholly neglect public worship yet a slight excuse will detain him from the house of God – a less excuse than would keep him from attending to worldly concerns. He does not find anything of that amiableness in the tabernacle of the Lord which David found. So little interested is he in that place that he can quietly sleep there under the most alarming discourse (and profess that because the preaching is dull) when were he attending to his worldly concerns his eyes would be kept wide open. He is led sometimes to believe that it is as well for him just to read his bills at home as to hear it said in the pulpit not remembering that it is by the foolishness of preaching that God saves men. And his deficiency is peculiarly manifest in those social prayer and conference meetings which are appointed during the week. The merest worldly trifle will keep him from these: although perhaps he can recollect that when he lived near to God he found great pleasure in thus meeting his brethren and at the social prayer meeting. The backslider indeed always has excuses enough at hand for neglecting such religious meetings during the week. But the truth is these are not the real hindrance. The difficulty lies in the fact that he does relish those meetings - he does not love the subject which is there introduced – viz. religion. There is no man who cannot ordinarily if he desire it spare two hours every week from his worldly affairs to unite with his brethren in worshipping God. But religion if it exist in his heart is in decaying state and he loves the world much better than God. And he is generally prevented from attendance upon (religious meetings because) public worship on the Sabbath except that he has little or no relish for the exercise of those meetings. Yet this disposition my brethren and to neglect the ordinances of God's appointment is an alarming proof of an great deficiency in the state of the Christian. We may be almost certain that the man who does not love the sanctuary of God does not love his closet - and we need not be surprised if such an one finally apostatizes.

*[Asterisk seems to refer to insert]*

\*Another evidence some Christians give that they are in a backslidden (alienated) state is that they confess themselves to be in such a state and profess to condemn themselves and yet do not reform. When they have acknowledge their lukewarmness they feel as if that were all they have to do. They seem to regard confession of sin as equivalent to repentance. And they live on month after month and year after year always ready to acknowledge themselves to be following Christ afar off and yet never making any effectual efforts to quicken their pace (that they may approach nearer to him). This is one of the most effectual ways that can be taken to ward off the reproofs of the brethren and the reproof of the conscience. And we might add it is an effectual way to provoke God to give us up to declension.

But on the other hand some of Christians or professing Christians furnish evidence of the low state of religion in their hearts by an opposite course - by feeling irritated when a brother of the church enquires into the state of their heart and drops a word of reproof or exhortation. I have often thought it one of the most conclusive proofs of guilt we can have if we find unusual irritation or resentment rising within us one when faithfully searched and reproofed. It is an old and striking yet homely proverb that the bird which is hit always flutters. And when we find irascible or resentful feelings excited within us by faithful preaching or conversation we may with almost equal certainty conclude that we are guilty of the very fault that is charged upon us notwithstanding we feel the charge to be so unjust. The fact is it is a difficult matter to offend the Christian who lives near to God by telling him his faults. And even if we charge him with some.....things of which he is not guilty so deep is his sense of the deceitfulness (and



depravity) of his heart that he will be almost disposed to acknowledge himself guilty even contrary to the convictions of his own conscience.

But not so with the apostatized (backsliding) Christian. He feels as if his brethren were interfering with that which does not belong to them when they come to probe his heart and tell him of his departure from God and instead of condemning himself and repenting he condemns them for their faithfulness crying *physician heal thyself*. And the manifestations of such feeling is a strong presumptive evidence that the man is following Christ like Peter afar off and will soon be tempted to deny him.

*[End of insert]*

The fifth (sixth) evidence of departure from God is a secret scepticism upon religious subjects.

If this exist in a great degree in the heart that man has taken many a backward step in his Christian course and he is well nigh joining the multitude who are crying out to crucify his Lord. But scepticism in a greater or less degree always results from a neglect of the closet. Faith is the work of God's Spirit and it must be fed from the original fountain or it will weaken sicken and die. No matter how firm is a Christian's convictions of the truth and reality of every doctrine of religion and of religious experience yet if his closet be an unfrequented place he will be beset with doubts on these points. For when he neglects to call on God for light and assistance God neglects to grant them to him. And he will of course be left to lean to his own understanding. And if left to this he will inevitably begin to doubt on the most important subjects. He will be led at first to suspect that most of what is called religious experience is enthusiasm. He will be inclined to suspect that all those Christians who displayed great zeal in the cause of Christ were under the influence of a heated imagination. Enthusiasm indeed will appear to him every day a worse and worse enemy while he never thinks what an enemy to Christ is indifference - although it is most certainly true that overenthusiasm has slain its thousands lukewarmness and scepticism have slain their ten thousands. The professed Christian is led next to doubt the reality of what is called the home a change of heart and he thinks he does not see so much difference between those who are professedly regenerate and those who are not but that the latter have some chance of salvation. Those doctrines also which he once esteemed essential to the Gospel he now begins to look upon with a jealous eye and to doubt whether they are not mere speculation. And indeed he is often left to doubt the very fundamentals of all religion such as the existence and attributes of God - the immortality of the soul, etc. Often the backslider finds as much difficulty and mystery in these as in the peculiar pastimes of the Gospel. He finds an universal scepticism indeed occasionally seizing upon his mind and he looks upon all professed Christians at times as being deluded. This understanding is most evidently darkened being alienated from the life of God because of this blindness of his heart. And it is but too manifest that God has given him up to strong delusions to believe a lie because he has received not the love of the truth that he might be saved.

This scepticism in a greater or less degree usually lies concealed for a time in the bosom of apostatizing Christian. But unless God open his eyes and bring him back to his first love it breaks out at length into broad daylight and the man becomes a second Hymenaeus making shipwrecks of the faith. When arrived at this advanced stage of declension he does not hesitate to deny the Lord that bought him and made a ridicule of those very truths which but a short time previous he held dear as his life and from which he derived all his support and comfort. He now is a Jew or a Mahometan - a Deist an Universalist - as any thing in short according to his circumstances or prejudices. And all this may be traced back to his neglect of his closet.

The last evidence of declining religion in the heart is at first laxity and at length open profligacy in practice.

Here too we may look back to the root of the difficulty viz. a neglect of secret prayer for this leads a man as already shown to omit self-examination and the reading of the scriptures. And whoever does not look frequently at God's law to observe its strictness and extent will have but low conceptions of the evil of sin and he who regards this as a small evil will begin to look upon lesser (especially small) offenses as matters of indifference in the sight of God. The backsliding Christian finds himself in the first instance justifying those amusements of the world which are frequently styled harmless and even necessary to our comfort but which the Christian has often found to bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. He is disposed to join in these and to find fault with those rigid professors who speak against them. In cases of discipline in the church he will always take part with the offender and endeavor to palliate his offense. He has great fears lest we should make religion a gloomy and forbidding a thing by requiring too great exactness in duty and abstinence from all innocent amusement. He has enlarged views of God's mercy and cannot believe he will punish a man for those little things which do no injury to society. And perhaps he carries his views so far that sometimes he does not believe God will punish any of the human race with everlasting destruction.

These loose notions about religious duty yearly gain upon the apostatizing (backsliding) Christian. Yet he still professes to be a friend of morality and as far as in him lies to live agreeable to the precepts of the Gospel. But it is evident to intimate friends that a dreadful shock has been given to the sense of moral obligation in his bosom and that corrupt habits are fast erupting upon him. During this period were the man to look back and compare his present loose notions and practices with his strictness and purity formerly when he lived near to God it would startle him: but such retrospects and comparisons are no longer practiced by him and he goes on waning more and more until at length unless God interpose open immorality and irreligion close the mournful history. His loose habits and loose opinions triumph over all restraints and the man can no longer conceal his rottenness from the world - but turns out at last to be a blasphemous or an adulterer or an extortioner or a drunkard or a thief or a liar or some other character which God has sworn by himself shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. If the man be a professor the Church at this stage of his apostasy interposes and in some few cases such persons have been reclaimed - such as David and Peter: but in most instances the church is compelled to eject them from her communion and they go out from among Christians thus showing that they were never of them. God of mercy! Save us of this church from such an awful end as this!

It seems unnecessary brethren to make a formal application of this discourse. You could not help applying it yourselves - and your conscience have borne testimony as I have proceeded either in favour of or against you (us). They have told us whether we are in the habit of neglecting secret prayer ejaculatory prayer - reading the scriptures and self-examination. Whether we have or have not a relish as much as formerly for practical religious conversation - whether we feel as much anxiety as formerly for the impenitent whether we neglect more than in months or years past religious worship ordinary and special. Whether we indulge a secret unbelief of those sentiments which we have formerly declared before God and man that we believe to be the fundamentals of religion. And whether we are more loose in our practice than formerly. Conscience I say has given some answer to every one of these particulars. And moved only prayer that we may all of us be enabled to act as conscience has dictated. Does acquit us? Then I say the subject exhibits to us the means of preserving the lamp of religion burning bright in the heart. We have shown you the beginning - the fatal root of all apostasies in religion. They always commence in the closet. Point me to the man who neglects reading his bible and self-examination and I will point you to the man who does not frequent his closet. Point me to him who

spends whole days without so much as making the ejaculatory petition God be merciful to me a sinner and you point to the man who does not love secret prayer. Show me a Christian who has little anxiety for the impenitent and who forsakes all the hours of God and the social conference and that is the man who forsakes also his closet. Tell me of the man who has been led to abandon one after another the fundamentals of the Gospel which is one blessed and you may rest assured that he never began to doubt on the subject until he began to forsake his closet. And finally show me the professing Christian whose practice is loose or openly corrupt and I will stake my reputation upon the assertion that he does not love to frequent his closet. The way therefore working naturally to preserve ourselves from apostasy is to persevere and increase in the habit of secret fervent prayer and we may rest assured that God will cause us to start.

But does conscience this morning testify against us and set us down in the list of backslidden Christians who are following Christ afar off? Then the subject shows us what is to be done in order to a restoration to the favour of God. If apostasies commence in the closet then we must begin their reformation in the closet. Let the backsliding (alienated) Christian resume the practice which he has abandoned of faithful secret prayer and he will soon be brought to see from whence he has fallen. Let him do the first works and he will find repentance accompanying it. But if he who am backslidden (apostatizing) and there is little doubt but conscience my brethren tells many of us that we are in this state, if we merely acknowledge that we are so and do not go back to (recurring) the habit of secret prayer depend upon it we shall see recede farther and farther from Christ until we lose sight of him entirely and never see him more till we meet him in judgment.

Delivered

At Conway August 1822

At Plainfield October 1822

At Amherst College September 1840

At Amherst College June 1845

At Amherst College May 18 1851

## Sermon 119 [Man's Enmity to God Part 1]

[Sermon No. 119, "Man's Enmity to God," Acts 7:51, Part I, 1824 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 6]

Acts 7:51

*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*

*[A sermon about grace. Hitchcock talks of the agitation some men feel due to internal conflict about religion; see par. 9.]*

So powerful and correct in her decisions and reproof in conscience that men cannot ignorantly violate the plain and established rules of morality without feeling guilty. But so darkened and perverted is the understanding in regard to God that a man may live threescore years and ten in habitual neglect of the first great commandment thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and yet remain wholly ignorant of any such omission. Nay he may all this time not only neglect the love of God but live in active rebellion against heaven while he supposes himself doing nearly as well as he can. While he feels indignant at any palpable violations of the laws of morality honor decency and natural tenderness and sympathy he cannot be made to realize that he is not withstanding an enemy of God and a child of wrath. But it is nevertheless most unquestionably true that such a man's heart may be the field where a battle is fought daily between him and his Maker. But owing to his ignorance of himself and of the law and character of God he would resent such an insinuation and regard it as the ravings of bigotry and fanaticism.

But if such be the deceitfulness of the heart how supremely important that the preacher of the Gospel use every method to strip away the delusive veil that hangs over the heart of the natural man and hold up his uncovered bosom in all its hostility to his Maker! Acting on this principle it is one of the grand objects of the faithful preacher to convince men of their deep-rooted opposition and enmity to God. When this is once effected the sinner cannot rest easy. Till this is effected there is no hope that his slumbers will be broken - no hope that the curse of broken law will be removed from him no hope that he will be made a friend of God. It is however a truth that meets with more repulsion in the heart of the sinner than any other in the whole Gospel. But does this excuse the minister from bringing it forward in any shape in his power and urging it with all his energies? Would he be a faithful surgeon who should neglect to lay open the wound of his patient to the bottom when his life depended upon the operation because the patient shrunk from it and thought it unnecessary?

As already hinted most men are ignorant of the modes in which their enmity to God displays itself - that is those things which to the Christian are conclusive proof that the man is resisting the Holy Ghost are not regarded as such by the impenitent. I mean at this time to present some of these evidences upon the consciences of such. And what I want my hearers is that you should accompany me into your own hearts: for there I intend to go for proof of enmity to God and should you unexpectedly find hatred or indifference to Him to lie at the bottom of your souls do not close your eyes to the evidence of its existence nor be offended if I strip off the veil that now conceals it from you. For the discovery would be the most important that can be made and your worst enemy is the man who would convince you no such enmity exists in your bosom if it really be there. A mistake here is a mistake for eternity.

That kind of opposition to God we are considering at this time manifests itself in other feelings of the natural heart either towards the doctrines or the experimental part of religion. And we shall consider this subject under three these heads -

1. Let us look at the feelings of the heart of man naturally towards the doctrines of the Gospel. Not that all men have these feelings in the degree in which they will here be described for education and early prejudice often very much modified and soften down this enmity: yet in many a heart it is suffered to rise in all its native bitterness.

But will it not be necessary previously to discussing this subject to show precisely what are the doctrines of the Gospel and which of them are necessary to be believed in order to salvation. We think not. For we are going to see the argument in another point. We want you my hearers to acknowledge that the Bible is inspiration: otherwise it will be useless to address you. And now we will suppose that the natural man has been accustomed to sit under the ministry of a man who in his pulpit exercises makes free and frequent use of certain phraseology in the New Testament which is regarded by many as hard to be understood. With him regeneration and saving faith and grace and sanctification and adoption and atonement and justification by free grace without works are familiar terms. And he urges the necessity of being born again and groups all unrenewed men into one multitude who are all and every one of them enemies of God. Showing them that they are under condemnation of eternal death and that God is angry with them every day and except they repent they must be crushed under the almighty and everlasting wrath. He tells them in the strongest language of the bible that a strange punishment is reserved for the wicked that they will be trodden down in the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God and the undying worm will gnaw them and the unquenchable fire consume. Moreover notwithstanding this their dreadful condition he tells them he has no hope of their feeling their danger or escaping it unless God in sovereign mercy pours out upon them become the converting and correcting influences of his Spirit and besides all this he does not hesitate to declare to them that God has mercy many on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth - and that salvation is wholly of grace through faith and that not of themselves it is a gift of God. In short the burden of this man's preaching is that men by nature are totally alienated from God that they are dead in trespasses and sins and enemies to all holiness - under condemnation from which nothing can save them but Christ and that they must be born again of water and the Spirit - and yet if they are saved it will all be owing not to their exertions but to the sovereign grace of God in Christ.

Now the heart of man naturally revolts at almost every one of these truths. He feels a strong disgust rising within him when they are forcibly and plainly presented to him. When charged with being an enemy of God he feels certain that it is not true. He knows that he does not hate God but on the contrary has a reverence and perhaps love for him. He is not so totally bad and abandoned as the charge supposes but he feels that he has many good qualities within him. And as to regeneration by a sovereign influence of the Spirit he believes it to be delusion. Besides all our exertions cannot procure regeneration nor have any influence upon God then such a man will say it is of no consequence whether I do anything since it will be of no manner of service - if God designs and has deemed to save me I shall be saved do what I will and if he has decided to destroy me I shall be damned do what I can. And if our own works of righteousness cannot recommend us in the least to God then it is no matter whether we ever have any righteousness or not. The doctrine of eternal torments too viewed in connection with this system is most offensive to the natural heart. It appears tyrannical and abominable to suppose God will punish so dreadfully those who had such dispositions by nature that they never would love God till his great grace compelled them to it and when the preacher of righteousness presses upon his conscience

in the glowing and awful manner of the scriptures this doctrine of everlasting misery this man calls it preaching terror and imagines he is endeavouring to frighten his hearers into religion.

That such are the feelings of multitudes when listening to such a description of preaching cannot be doubted. The fact is plain as the sun at noon day - and probably very many of us can testify to its truth by our own former experiences. But the unrenewed man will reply and say that if he grant such are his feelings on hearing the doctrines of grace as they are called yet how do they prove an enmity of heart to God unless those doctrines be proved to be true which is the very point at issue. We shall not attempt at this time to establish the truth of these doctrines by reasoning or an array of texts of scripture. But there are certain facts almost universally true of the man who finds a disgust towards these doctrines which facts show that the real difficulty lies not in their great absurdity but in opposition of the heart to everything that is holy.

And first if the opposition and disgust of the natural man towards the doctrines of grace lay in their manifest absurdity his feelings would not be so violently agitated as they are. Such a man when hearing these doctrines preached or in conversing upon them feels an irritation and excitement and a disgust towards those who believe them much greater than on any other subject. He feels as if it scarcely requires common sense and any man to see that these doctrines are perfectly absurd and contradictory. And yet instead of pitying those who embrace them as poor weak deluded men he feels toward them a bitterness greater than towards any other description of men and among his friends he indulges in the most severe reproaches. Now did he really in his heart believe these doctrines to be false unscriptural and contradictory he would endeavour in the most tender and compassionate manner to convince those who believe them that they were deluded and he could not have a heart to reproach them. He would point them to the very texts of scripture that proved them erroneous - and he would go into his closet and pray that the veil might be removed from their understandings. But did ever a man who fell opposed to these doctrines take such a course? Never. And why? There is such a thing my hearers as the heart being violently opposed to a particular sentiment while the conscience approves of it: and hence there will arise in the mind a quarrel. Now do not the violent feelings manifested by the natural man against the doctrines of grace lead us to suspect that there may be in his bosom such a contest as this? Conscience may tell him that he does not love or serve God and that his whole heart is given with the title of its affections to the world and that he is altogether destitute of holiness and that he must have a radical change wrought within him by the special agency of the Spirit of God ere he can enter heaven. But his heart may resist such offensive truths and summon the partial decisions of the understanding to its aid. And this may be the source of the great and unusual agitation of feeling the man evinces on the subject. His heart is making a desperate effort to stifle conscience and to bolster itself up into impenitence.

The second thing that shows the opposition of the unrenewed man to the doctrines of grace to be in the heart and not in the conscience is that he does not unless forced to it resort to the scriptures to prove the absurdity and falsity of these doctrines. I have supposed such an one want to believe the bible to be given by inspiration of God and therefore he ought to regard it as an infallible and the ultimate standard by which to try every opinion in religion. But when such an one rejects with disgust the doctrines above alluded to if you ask him why he disbelieves them in nine cases out of ten he will answer because they are unreasonable and absurd. And though he may add as a second reason that they are unscriptural yet he will put their absurdity first and thus show that the main difficulty lies there: whereas the first enquiry ought to be do the scriptures teach these doctrines - if they do he ought to receive them or deny the bible. But the natural man often feels so strong a prejudice on the subject that he will declare that the scriptures themselves cannot prove such absurdities. But if they are found in the bible it will not

prove them to be true but will prove the bible to be false. Instead such a man does not go to the scriptures with close searching anxious enquiries to know what they teach on these subjects until those prejudices are rooted and his opinion is fixed against them or until he is driven there by an antagonist. And why does he not resort to this only standard under heaven for religious opinions? Is he willing to risque his salvation upon his own reasonings when there is an infallible criterion at hand? Dare he say that God has not said certain things without searching the scriptures to know what God has said? Why hearers there is such a thing as a man's being so prejudiced against the truth that he dare not examine the evidence in its favour lest he should be convinced of his error and be compelled to recant. And it is greatly to be feared that many a man in another world will find this to have been his case in regard to religion. The scriptures tell us of an adder that is deaf not because there is a defect in her hearing but because she stoppeth her ear.

But these remarks will derive additional force when we remark in the third place that the natural man does not read the bible with prayer in forming a system of religious beliefs. Among so many clashing opinions as exist in the world it would seem that when such an one reads in the bible that if any man lack wisdom he may ask it of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not – and it shall be given him - it would seem he would like to lay hold of this promise with avidity and giving up all other confidences go daily and besiege the mercy seat with importunate prayer that he might be guided into all truth – that his prejudices might be expelled his heart subdued and that he might not be left to believe a lie. What can be plainer than this promise of Divine direction to those who seek it - and what can be more agreeable to the honest sincere man than to go to God in prayer that his understanding may be open to behold wondrous things out of his law! When a man meets in scripture with the declaration, *except a man be born of water, etc.*, if he were honest if he earnestly desired to know the truth instead of saying this text was hard to be understood he would daily pray over it - when he reads that God *hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom etc.*, instead of saying the doctrine of sovereignty and election is contrary to common sense and it makes God an arbitrary omnipotent demon he would daily go with such texts to his closet and earnestly pray that the true meaning might be made manifest to his to his mind and that he might be made to believe it and submit to it.

Now if a man does not take this method of earnest prayer over the bible in forming his opinions on the most important of all subjects does it not show that his heart is radically wrong? Does it not leave room for a suspicion that his opposition to certain doctrines proceeds from an opposing and an unsanctified heart? And yet the unrenewed man does not take this prayerful method in establishing his religious opinions. If you should even say that he had formed his system of belief from the scriptures he will not dare to say if the question is solemnly put to him that he goes daily into his closet and there on his knees beseeches God to give him a right understanding of all the bible. Conscience testifies and the records of heaven testify that no such prayers are ever just put up by him unless he is brought under convictions. Prayer is a word - prayer is a which the impenitent man does not love. Here then is a touchstone by which we may determine whether we have taken such a course in forming our religious sentiments as will abide the trial of the judgment day. If we were in the habit when forming our creed...sentiments would take would be to pray over every chapter of the bible and to pray too with an earnest desire to be directed by the Spirit of God. To take an opposite course evinces a strong prejudice against the doctrines of grace and shows that the man does not feel his own weakness and ignorance and need of divine assistance.

But some one will say perhaps these are unfounded charges upon the natural man. Perhaps he has none of this violence and irritation of feeling. Perhaps he did always go to the bible to prove the doctrines of grace erroneous and perhaps he has daily for years prayed fervently and earnestly over the scriptures. If

all this be true of any man surely he is not the person to whom this discourse will apply. But my hearers let us search ourselves and enquire whether we have taken a consistent scriptural course in forming our sentiments. There is one question we can easily decide - did we in forming our religious sentiments - do we now read the bible diligently with earnest prayer? If we have not done this conscience testifies that we have not done it. And do we feel easy to risque our salvation on a creed formed without prayer? Do we presume to say that such and such sentiments of our neighbours are absurd and contradictory because they are opposite to our own when we have never looked to God for divine direction? O if we have built on such a sandy foundation hearers whether it be you or whether it be me depend upon it that when the rains descend and the floods come and our [????] will fall and bury us in its ruins.

*[The last two pages seem to repeat much of what was said previously.]*

...of daily praying with a sincere heart and an ardent desire to be directed by God - if we were led to give up our prejudices if we continued this habit of prayer year after year - nay if we continued it still then have we reason to hope that we have been kept from fatal errors. But the man who has formed his opinions without a habit of prayer - without feeling his need of prayer has no reason to presume that he is correct and scriptural. Most surely then the opposition of such a man to any of the doctrines a prayerful man thinks he finds in the bible afford not the least proof that those doctrines are untrue because by neglecting prayer such a person is totally unfit to judge of those doctrines. The weakest man with prayer is more likely to understand these fundamentals of the Gospel than a Newton without it.

These are some of the accidental circumstances that show the objections that natural man makes to the doctrines of grace to result not from his head so much as from his heart and they show him to be always resistant the Holy Ghost. The argument we have been laying down is simply this. A man feels within him a strong opposition to a certain truths which a great majority of the Christian world have supposed to be found in the bible. Now the enquiry is not whether the doctrines be true or false: but is there nothing in the conduct or feelings of the man that show the real difficulty to lie in his heart and not in the monstrous absurdity and bad tendency of these doctrines? Is there not a manifest inconsistency in his conduct on the supposition that he is really sincere and honest in his religious enquiries? In the first place there is a violence in his opposition and in irritation is feeling towards those who differ from him which we never see in the man who has calmly and sincerely and prayerfully sought for the truth and possesses a solid and rational confidence that he is scriptural and correct. Such an one is always calm and steady and feels a regret and pity towards those differing from him instead of disgust and hatred. In the second place such a man does not unless forced resort to the scriptures to prove the falsity of these doctrines - or rather he shows more confidence in his reasons on the subject than the express declarations of the bible thus showing most plainly that he did not in the first place learn from the scriptures that those doctrines were false - and therefore we have reason to believe that the real difficulty lies in his heart. In the third place the same thing is evident from the fact that this man in forming his religious system of beliefs did not read the bible with prayer. Now it is very evident the course an unprejudiced honest mind that felt the importance of being correct in his...

Delivered

At Conway August 1824

At Amherst West Parish Sabbath Evening March 13 1831



## Sermon 120 [Man's Enmity to God Part 2]

[Sermon No. 120, "Man's Enmity to God," Acts 7:51, Part II, 1824 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 6]

Acts 7:51

*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*

*[In the last few paragraphs Hitchcock discusses his personal battle with scepticism or ungodliness.]*

There is no man who has not a natural inclination to adopt some system of religion. There is no one who does not at times feel the need of it: and were men permitted to be religious in their own way could they bend the will of God at their pleasure no sacrifices of their worldly concerns would be thought too great for them to secure future happiness. But when they find only one strait and narrow path into Paradise - only one name under heaven whereby they can be saved - only *one Lord one faith one baptism* - when they find that their pride must be mortified and subdued that their wills must be humbled that they must receive salvation as a merited gift - when they find that they must give their whole hearts to God and be crucified to the world and whether they eat or drink or whatever they do must do all to the glory of God - this is a system too mortifying for human nature to adopt. Human nature therefore will endeavour to rob this system of its peculiarities and to shorten the standard God has established till it is brought down to the measure of a man. Thus when the Gospel can be embraced without sacrificing the world or wounding the pride - when a man can hold religion in his left hand and the world in his right - you will find men pressing into the kingdom of heaven. But alas for deluded mortals, *God never made his work for man to mend*. If we will not humble ourselves to accept of salvation under God's terms even by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the renewing of the Holy Ghost law of God stands out against us in all its strict and unbending rigor and there is no arm that can avert its thunders. But while in a natural state we do feel an unconquerable aversion to this method of salvation. And when the Spirit of God urges it upon our acceptance we do if possible always resist the Holy Ghost. Like Naaman if we can be made clean by washing in Abana or Pharpar we do not object but rather than wash in the contemptible Jordan in that fountain *set open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness we prefer retaining the foul leprosy that is upon us*. In very few cases however while unrenewed are we sensible of such a repugnance to the Gospel message of salvation. We believe there are real difficulties and innumerable absurdities in the system of revealed truth our fathers have delivered down to us and we are astonished at their credulity and ignorance not once suspecting that the grand difficulty lies in our stubborn and unrenewed hearts. To trace this opposition to its true source was the effect of the morning discourse. But this native repugnance of ours is not confined to the doctrines of the Gospel - it exists also with greater bitterness in respect to experimental piety. And of this also we are in general very ignorant while unrenewed. We have no idea that we are in the least hostile to pure vital religion. We think our sole objections lie against certain disgusting doctrines which we do not believe are taught in Scripture. It is important therefore if we really are daily resisting the Holy Ghost by our opposition to vital godliness and yet are ignorant of it it is important we should know it: for inasmuch as we exhibit opposition to holiness in man we do it towards God and if it can be proved that we do not love piety in a fellow man it will follow that we are enemies to the character of God. Let us take then my hearers the torch of self-examination and dive once more into the dark corners of our hearts and see if we cannot there discover an unthought of disrelish and

opposition to practical religion.

And first our natural opposition to experimental or practical religion is manifest from our feelings when we hear practical piety faithfully and plainly preached in the pulpit.

If the minister of Christ urge with force and emphasis the repulsive doctrines of the Gospel we enquire or we feel willing to enquire why do he does not bring forward practical subjects and let the speculative mysteries alone? For since great and good men differ about them they can be of little consequence. Very soon perhaps the preacher adopts the very course we profess to wish him to adopt viz. to bring forward practical subjects. He urges us to immediate reformation and warms us to prepare for the judgment. He calls upon us to break off from all our sins - urges us to abandon the effort to love God and Mammon - exhorts parents to pray in their families and instruct their households in religion - presses upon all of us the imperious duties of self-examination and secret prayer by telling us that if we neglect these duties we shall most assuredly lose our souls and in short he exhorts us to devote all our faculties of body and soul to the service of God. This is real practical preaching and we dare not say that any of these things are not our duty. But at the same time we know that in almost every one of them we are utterly deficient. We know that we do not give up the world for Christ nor pray in our closets. And how then is it possible for us to avoid applying such a sermon to ourselves? It excites within us a disgust and perhaps resentment against the man who has been so plain and faithful in exhibiting our duty and this tends to silence the voice of conscience - or we get the idea that his sermon was personal because it applies so closely to our case although the preacher disclaims all personalities or we try to persuade ourselves that his requirements are unnecessarily rigid - or we refer to some professed Christian who neglects these duties and feel wonderfully propped up by his example - or we enter into conversation with some unregenerate acquaintance and either ridicule some part of the performance or endeavour to find defects in them - or we suffer worldly subject to intrude upon our minds - in short we take any course in which we can shield ourselves from those arrows which this practical sermon is fixing in our consciences. We resist the influences of the Spirit and shield ourselves as soon as possible in the impenetrable armour of the world. But were we honestly desirous to perform God's will and were warped by no prejudices the effect of such a sermon would be to lead us immediately to the performance of these requirements. Yet we neglect them: and does not this fact show that we have within us an aversion to practical religion?

We may reply to all this by saying that there are some subjects we love to hear discussed in the pulpit. Let the preacher expatiate upon the moral and social duties - let him muster all his eloquence and pour forth his warmest zeal against stealing and lying and fraud and slander and intemperance or let him urgently and warmly press the moral duties upon us urging to honesty and integrity and truth and charity and benevolence - or let him exhibit in glowing colours the natural attributes of God and his benevolence - or describe the sufferings of Christ and the fullness of his redemption or let him hold up the joys of heaven to allure our feet into the paths of virtue and religion - in all these subjects our feelings go along with the speaker and we feel a warm approbation of what he has said and an earnest desire that it may take effect and we often find the involuntary tear stealing down our cheeks under his ministrations. And now if we by nature be opposed to vital godliness why should we take any interest in religious subjects?

The answer to all this is very easy. The reason we are pleased with such subjects is that they gratify our natural tastes but do not touch the conscience. We do not feel after hearing them as if something must be done by us. Nothing is here said about repentance regeneration or the influence of the Spirit or our own sinfulness. We live our lives perhaps and therefore it gratifies us to be praised for it and we are

furthermore flattered with the idea that those virtues are purchasing heaven for us. But when the faithful preacher marks to the natural man the wide gulf there is between him and God when he opens his own heart and holds it before his eyes forcing him to look into it - when he calls upon him as Christ did upon the young ruler to make some painful sacrifice when he comes to cut away his self-righteousness and urge him to trust in Christ - when he tells him how absolutely necessary it is that a radical revolution should be brought in him and that he must be in the habit of daily secret prayer - such truth sit by no means easy upon his conscience who flatters himself that *he is rich and has need of nothing and knows not that he is poor and blind and miserable and naked*. And nothing is so disgusting to the natural heart as practical preaching - that is preaching to the heart and the conscience. Such a man prefers to hear anything rather than a history of his own heart and hence it is he has such feelings of irritation and disgust under faithful experimental preaching and although he may suppose that he is quarreling with the minister yet he is in truth stirring with his Maker.

In the second place ornate native hostility to vital religion is manifest from our feelings towards devoted Christians. There are some men who live so near to God and manifest such a zeal in his service and seem to be men of such faith and prayer that all others take knowledge of them that they have been with Christ and all allow them to be real children of God. But while in a natural state we do not love the religious character of such a man. We are apt to think him righteous over much - we do not like to have him pray so much and we take pleasure in hearing anything that proves him to be a hypocrite and we do not feel easy in his society. We feel afraid he will address us personally contrary to the state of our souls and we derive much more satisfaction in the society of the man of uprightness in his dealings firmness in his integrity and affability in address who will converse nicely and fluently upon the things of the world but who says nothing about practical religion and does not like to pray. Now how does this fat look when we recollect that love to the brethren today is one of the most distinguishing marks of regeneration.

To be a little more particular - we complain of this devoted servant of God because he is too apt to converse upon religious subjects at all times and makes it too public and common a thing. Whereas we conceive religion to be a matter almost exclusively between the man and his Master and therefore we conclude is not but to say much condemning our own experience since ostentatious religion is most ridiculous. But the difficulty in this case is that while we acknowledge religion to lie between God and our souls we do not make it a matter between him and us. We do not pray to him in our closets nor enter into self-examination there unless it be in seasons of sickness or affliction. We attend to every concern in life more faithfully than to secret devotions. We rarely put any close questions to ourselves concerning our preparation for death. We rarely or never enquire seriously ourselves whether we have been born again which whatever it may mean Christ declares to be essential to salvation. One or two short prayers daily (if indeed we pray at all) constitutes all our intercourse with God and some little conversation with our friends concerning some controverted point in religion constitutes all our religious intercourse with them. We do not converse with them upon vital practical godliness. We say nothing to them about a religious experience nor about the duty and pleasure of conversation with God. And the true reason why the natural man complains of the devoted Christian is because his conduct and conversation reprove him. And he is most of all fearful that such an one will be conversing upon the religion of the heart concerning which he is ignorant.

Another complaint we bring while in an unrenewed state against the devoted Christian is that he encourages by his commendation and attendance too many social religious meetings for prayer praise and mutual impression at other times than on the Sabbath. Such meetings we conceive appear ostentatious and if we wish to pray for the conversion of sinners and the enlargement of the

Redeemer's kingdom we can do it in our closets and if we wish to improve in religion we can read the bible at home. Whether such social religious meetings are agreeable to the will of God is not my business at this time to examine. But one or two facts will show that our professed objections to them while in the state of nature are not real ones. We say it is better to go into our closets and spend a portion of our time in prayer for sinners and then in reading the Scriptures. But the truth is we take no such course - nor do we scarcely pray at all for them. Were we to set apart one or two evenings each week to be spent in this manner we might consistently object to such social meetings. But so long as we do nothing of the kind our words contradict our actions and show that our objections lie in the want of a relish for such meetings. At the same time that we thus object we are willing to spend many evenings in receiving or paying ordinary visits. And why? Because we have a relish for them - we love them. If we had no relish for the worldly subjects then discussed we should object against them. And here we see the true source of the difficulty in regard to religious meetings - we do not love the subjects there introduced viz. practical religion.

We object however still further that such meetings tend to produce enthusiasm and of all enemies to religion this is the most deadly. Without stopping to enquire whether this objection be well-founded or not it will just show where the real difficulty lies in the natural man's heart to remark that while he faces enthusiasm so much he never expresses any fears about coldness or indifference in religion. While he clothes the former in all its terrific dress and puts into its right hand a bloody sword and into its left a fiery faggot and lets it loose in imagination among God's heritage to trample it underfoot and burn his sanctuary during all this time the fears of danger from coldness and indifference in religion does not enter his heart.

But how contrary is this state of feeling to that expressed in scripture which is full of exhortations to grow in grace - to be always zealously affected in a good thing to watch and pray and which declares lukewarmness in religion to be more offensive to God than open opposition. And how few denunciations does it contain against excessive zeal. There is indeed such a thing as enthusiasms. But these facts show that the sacred writers knew men to be in greater danger of becoming stupid in religion than overzealous. And when we find a feeling within us directly the reverse of this - that is when we are more fearful of enthusiasm than of lukewarmness ought it not to incite a suspicion that our hearts are very different from the hearts of those who wrote the bible?

In the last place our natural hostility to vital practical religion is manifest from our feelings in regard to the conversion of sinners.

When we meet with one of this world's most amiable characters and observe his lofty accomplishments of mind and his fine feelings of honor and integrity we do not feel and lament that he yet lacketh one thing. Although if he has not been born again he is every moment exposed to sink into everlasting burnings yet this idea does not occur to us. But it does occur and lies with weight upon the Christian mind and he meets such a man who is anxious above all other things to learn whether he be a friend of God. It struck the mind of Christ deeply when the young ruler came to him. And when the Christian learns that such a person has been brought to repentance it affords him the highest gratification. He feels as if his soul was renewed from the dominion of Satan and made an heir of honor glory and immortality. The angels of God also have joy over one sinner that repenteth. But not so the natural man. He takes no pleasure in learning that there is a radical change in this or that impenitent man. Nay it produces a depression and uncanniness in his mind: and he tries to persuade himself that it is a delusion and not religion. And if a companion be the subject of the work he feels no interest in communing with him on the subject but finds him now to an pleasant companion and he feels a restraint upon him when

in his presence. He has no desires that a concern for the soul should become general around him. He does not sincerely pray for a revival of religion and a time of general stupidity is more pleasant to him than a season of general attention to the concerns of the soul – although at the same time he will profess to be very desirous that pure religion should flourish everywhere.

Have I endeavoured to show that the natural man has a hostility to practical religion because his professions are totally at variance with his conduct. He professes to be fond of practical preaching and yet real close searching practical sermons are of all others most offensive to him. He professes that it is much better to say but little upon our own religious experience before the world and to be more diligent in secret duties towards God and yet he almost entirely neglects secret prayers and self-examination attending to them only just as to lull his conscience asleep. He declares it better to spend much time in the closet in praying for sinners and the conversion of the world than in social meetings and yet spends there no time at all for this purpose. He professes to desire the spread of religion and yet is pained and disgusted when he hears of the conversion of sinners around him. Now if such things the list of which might be swelled much more do not prove a disrelish for religion in the natural man I know not what can prove it.

But it may be asked where are such feelings to be found? I hope my hearers that none of them are to be found in this house. I do not know that they exist in a single heart in this house. But where is the proof that they exist in any heart? It is to be found in my own experience. Those feelings which I exhibited in the forenoon concerning the doctrines of religion and those brought forward at this time in relation to its practice are but an exhibition of my own former experiences. But what right have I to presume that any other person's experience is like my own. Merely on the principal my hearers so that *as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man*. Education and different restraints do no doubt much modify the feelings of men yet the groundwork in every heart is the same and therefore I did not hesitate from my own experience to describe the feelings and conduct I have exhibited to day as the feelings and conduct of the natural man in general terms. For whatever be my present condition whether it be any better or not when such feelings possessed me I know that I was in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity destitute of all holiness with a proud unsubdued heart which was swelling and rising against Jehovah. If that same unbelief and opposition exist within me O may God pour out on me an irresistible influence of his Holy Spirit to subdue it. I have no hope from any other quarter. To lean upon upon my own strength is to lean upon a broken staff. And if the like feelings exist in any of your hearts my hearers I have no hope that they will be subdued unless that Spirit accompany my words. If that Spirit be not poured out upon you my hearers I do finally believe those feelings will become stronger and stronger – that delusion deeper and deeper and that opposition will rise higher and higher so long as we live.

*But power divine can do the deed,  
And much to feel that power I need  
Thy Spirit can from dross refine,  
And move and melt this heart of mine.  
(2 verses more)*

*[Source: Hymn, unknown author]*

Delivered

At Conway August 7 1824

## Sermon 123 Evidences of Christian Character

[Sermon No. 123, "Evidences of Christian Character," I Peter 3:15, 1822 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 6]

I Peter 3:15

*Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a  
reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*

*[Very long dramatic ending.]*

If we were brought before an earthy tribunal to be tried for our lives – if the judges and the jury had assembled for our examination how solicitous should we be that no witness be permitted to give testimony whose character was not unimpeachable! We should by every method in our power endeavor to ascertain whether they were to be relied on in their evidence and if the least doubt could be raised of their integrity we should try to prevent their giving in evidence.

But when the question my hearers to be decided is concerning our regeneration on which the everlasting happiness or misery of our souls depends how much less anxious are men in seeing to it that no false witness testify in the case and be the means of leading them to eternal destruction! Whatever be the cause certainly we do not manifest nor feel as much anxiety on the point as we should in a trial for life before a court of justice. If some suspicious evidences appear in our favour we easily admit them and settle down into a serene opinion that we are assuredly candidates for heaven. Whereas were we to search up and examine all the evidence that might be found on both sides it might put a very different aspect upon the case and we might be left to see that we were yet in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity.

It is a principle in jurisprudence that it is better ten guilty persons should escape punishment and that one innocent man suffer. The laws of the land accordingly require the most decided evidence for the conviction of a criminal especially if the penalty of his alleged crime be death. So it is a principle in the science of religion that it is better ten real Christians should conclude themselves destitute of piety and possess no hope than that one irreligious man should be led to take up with the hope of the hypocrite which perishes when God takes away the soul. That is to say it is better to place the standard of Christian experience so high by admitting no evidence of piety that is in the least degree uncertain that many real children of God shall be left without hope than to make the evidences of piety so lax and broad that many an unregenerate man shall appropriate them to himself and thus be left to go on blindfold to ruin. For how immensely preferable is it my hearers that a man should go despairing to heaven than that we should go hoping to hell! On this principle I proceeded in the morning (if I may be permitted to borrow a phrase from our courts of civil law) to challenge many of the equivocal evidences on which many any men are prone to rely in proof of their conversion and by which probably many have been finally deluded. Perhaps this view of the subject which I firmly believe to be scriptural shook the hopes of some of us and perhaps some in despair were led to say to themselves if these are not evidences of regeneration what evidence can be found? To answer this enquiry is the object of this discourse. For notwithstanding the deceitfulness of the heart - notwithstanding the counterfeits that exist of almost every Christian grace we do believe there are certain marks and that these are given in

scripture whereby the real Christians can be distinguished from all hypocrites. And although there is perhaps as already remarked no single grace that may not be counterfeited and therefore it is not safe to rely upon an individual evidence of piety yet when we collect all the genuine evidences of conversion together they form such an harmonious union and present such an impenetrable front that Satan cannot imitate them. On these substantial these equivocal evidences - which cannot be on the one hand the result of mere enthusiasm nor on the other hand near cold hearted philosophy - on this we wish to turn your eyes my hearers. And may God grant that nothing may be advanced as evidential of piety which is not directly or indirectly advanced in the scriptures. And may we all of us who profess a hope in Christ be enabled to follow the discretion of the text and to give to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear. With meekness lest our practice give to the lie to our professions with fear lest after all we may think of ourselves alone what we ought to think and finally be cast away.

But there is one remark that strikes us on reading the text which I would stop one moment to repeat. It is this. It seems from the exhortation in the passage that it was the habit among primitive Christians to address one another concerning the ground of their hopes - to enquire of one another whether they had any evidence of this piety and to search one another's hearts with that faithfulness brethrenly love demand and the importance of the subject renders proper. How much is this duty neglected among Christians at the present day! We enquire of one another concerning the health of our bodies and the state of our temporal affairs: but how seldom do we ask one another to give a reason of the hope within us! Nay by many professing the Christian name such enquiries are considered as impertinent and improper and as the works of fanaticism and by many the enquiry what reason have you to think you are going to heaven? would be regarded as an insult. How very different is this feeling from that which prevailed in the days of the apostles - and is it not to be feared that the true cause why a man is unwilling to give a reason of the hope that is in him is because he has no reason?

And here I can hardly refrain from remarking that impenitent men might see in the fact just alluded to how directly opposed to the practice of the apostles is this practice. For less under the special awakening of God's Spirit they never enquire of one another on what ground they are resting and the reason of their resting on it. They converse together on every worldly subject with deep interest but never enquire of one another whether they are reconciled to God and prepared for heaven. How strikingly does this fact show that they are not prepared for heaven and that they do not take as much interest in the salvation of their souls as in the affairs of time and sense.

But to return from this aggression. What are the reasons a real child of God has for his hope? The final grand and comprehensive reason is he finds within him a prevailing relish for all spiritual objects.

An important distinction ought here to be mentioned. Suppose I had been relieved from deep distress and misery by one of my fellow men: and Suppose I continue to receive benefits from him for a long time. I can hardly fail of cherishing a love for the character of my benefactor. Now why is it that I love him? Plainly because I have been benefited by him. But it may be the general tenor of that man's feelings and sentiments is directly opposite to mine. It is mere gratitude then that attaches me to him and not because I delight in his general character. Just so the man who supposes God has bestowed on him regenerating grace and saved him from the miseries of hell may feel toward him a very great degree of gratitude: but at the same time it may be nothing more than gratitude for the holiness of God's character and his hatred of sin and his treatment of sinners may notwithstanding be totally opposite to the man's feelings. So that he loves God with a lot of gratitude but not for what he is in himself. And the same remark may apply to our supposed love for any other spiritual object. Now we are required to love

and the man born of God does love spiritual objects for what they are themselves without taking into account the benefits he receives from them. He loves them because there is a congruency or resemblance between the image of God in his soul and spiritual holy objects.

Let us now enumerate the chief of those spiritual things the regenerated heart loves.

1. He relishes the character of God. He is the service and centre the sum and substance of every thing spiritual and pure and the pious soul feels its affections drawn out in ardent attachment to a character to which nothing can be added to render it more perfect or lovely. Especially does the new heart love and relish the holiness of God by which I mean his moral perfection especially as it is manifested in his total opposition to sin and his just punishment of it. The holiness of God is an attribute or rather the perfection of all his attributes in which the Christian delights to contemplate. With the Psalmist he is disposed *to give thanks at the remembrance of this holiness*. He gives thanks for this because it is the grand bulwark that guards the universe from the desolations of sin and this is his security for perfect happiness in heaven.

2. The Christian relishes the character of Christ. The unregenerate man does not relish it. He has no attachment to it. Nay he is disgusted with it when held up to him and he is urged to love it. But the new heart is attached to the Saviour not only through gratitude but on account of the perfection and glory of his character. It views him as over all God blessed forever becoming incarnate and dying for the sins of man - and a display of benevolence and condescension so exalted so much beyond any thing man or angels had ever witnessed cannot fail of drawing the affections of any being that has a spark of holiness within him.

3. The Christian relishes the Holy Spirit. And this not merely because he knows that he is dependent upon the Spirit for his sanctification because there is a glory and a harmony in his attributes that awakens the reverence and the love of any being in whom there is the least holy taste. And when the regenerated heart contemplates the Father the Son and the Spirit as united in one perfect Being and yet essentially distinct in character and office his reverence admiration and love is increased and his heart responds to the sentiment of inspiration - *canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven: what canst thou do? deeper than hell what canst thou know?*

4. The Christian relishes his brethren - those I mean who bear the image of Christ. And this is the ground of his love not because they belong to the same party and give him support and assistance in an ungodly world. Here the love of the regenerate heart for his brethren will be in proportion to the endemic they five of holiness in their hearts. Those who appear most truly devoted to religion exemplifying it most in their conversation and conduct will have this firmest hold on his affections. Those who follow Christ at a distance will secure but a small share of his attachment.

Brotherly love is in scripture just down as a most decided mark of regeneration. *Hereby do we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that saith I love God and hateth his brother is a liar and the truth is not in him.* How certain is it then that we are enemies to religion if we do not relish the prayers the conversation and the character of devoted Christians. And how infallible a glass does this present to unregenerate men for discovering their true characters if they would not close their eyes to the light. For they know that the prayers the conversation and the religious character of the most eminent Christians do fill them with disgust and aversion.



5. The Christian relishes the Bible. This contains a development of the characters of God of Christ and of the Spirit and it exhibits also most conspicuously the holiness of God in the strictness and extent of his law in the immense sacrifice demanded to magnify the law and make it honorable and make God just while he justifies the believer in Jesus - and in the awful and interminable torrents that await the finally impenitent. Now what can be more interesting to a love of God and of holiness than such a development as this! If you loved an earthly friend on account of his excellent character you could not be better pleased than to receive an epistle from him elucidating all his interesting traits - detailing his deeds of benevolence and unfolding his plans of benevolence. Now the bible is that epistle the Christian has received from his heavenly friend in the like development of character and plans. How can he then repair from saying, *O how I love thy holy law! It is my meditation all the day! Mine eyes prevent the night watches that I might meditate in thy word!*

To express the Christian attachment to spiritual objects I have chosen to use the term relish instead of love merely from a hope of making its meaning more distinctly felt. It is easy for us my hearers to know whether we have a relish for a taste for earthly objects. When food is presented to you you do not hesitate a moment to decide whether it is agreeable or disagreeable to your taste. When you are engaged in any kind of employment you immediately perceive whether you have any relish for it. And you find no difficulty in determining whether you like or dislike a person's society with whom you associate. And now only apply this same style to religion and ask yourselves seriously whether you relish the character and government of God in Christ and the Holy Spirit - whether you are pleased or displease with devoted Christians life character and conversation and whether you have any taste for the doctrines you read in the bible? And can there be much difficulty in determining these questions? Yet when these are determined you have decided whether you are a child of God or not.

But let us look at some of the effects of this love or relish for spiritual objects. For these also are among the unequivocal evidences of regeneration.

1. One effect of a love to spiritual objects is to produce a love to the ordinances of the Gospel. In those ordinances the things to which the Christian is fondly attached are exhibited in a striking and alluring manner. It would therefore be a strange supposition that a child of God should not love to observe the Sabbath nor attend public worship nor join in the social conference - nor come to the Lord's table. Such an one would be a very different man from those believers of whom we have a history in the Old and N. Testaments.

2. Another important effect of a spiritual relish is a habit of public social family and secret prayer. If a man neglects these habitually and out of choice it is conclusive evidence that he is not a lover of God. On the other hand although irreligious men may be willing to gain sometimes in public and family prayer yet long continued regular voluntary fervent secret prayer is one of the best evidences a man can give of a change of heart. An unregenerate man may for a time continue in this practice but with Job we may ask, *will he always call upon God? Will he delight himself in the Almighty?* Very many in seasons of special attention to religion commence secret prayer who abandon it as soon as their fears of hell are departed and thus they evince that they are still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity.

3. A third effect of spiritual love or relish is a spirit of humility and gentleness and forgiveness of injuries.

By nature we are excessively proud and this pride is the great bar that lies in the way of our becoming religious. And although this terrible enemy is never destroyed in this life yet he is cast off from his throne in the heart and humility takes his place. A Christian is humbled by the habitual sense he has of

the exceeding wickedness of his heart - of the hatred God bears to sin and of the poor improvement he makes of the dispensations of Providence. He is apt to view himself as did Paul as the chief of sinners and the least of all Christians. And now can we not tell my hearers whether we do feel really deeply feel thus humble before God and man? Do we love to mortify our pride and endeavor to mortify it? If we do not we have neither part nor lot in the matter.

With such views of himself the Christian must feel a prevailing gentleness towards all men. And he will be ready to esteem others better than himself and feel under obligation to lend them all the assistance in his power.

He will also forgive his enemies - he will pray for his enemies - he will not indulge hatred toward his bitterest foe - but like Christ weeping over devoted Jerusalem so will he feel disposed to weep over the ungodliness of those who hate him.

A fourth effect of spiritual love is to prompt a man to a steady course of active exertion in the cause of Christ. He will feel that he is not his own but has been bought with a price and that all his talents and property are lent to him to be returned to God whenever his Providence shall demand. He will not therefore merely talk about doing something for Christ - he will actually do so. He will give of his property - he will give his influence - he will give all he can give to promote religion in the world. He will not merely acclaim those spiritual wants of his fellow men that happen to fall in his way but he will go and search for objects of benevolence - and thus manifest by his works that he is a child of God who sent his Son to seek and to save that which was lost.

A fifth effect of spiritual love is a warfare in the heart between the flesh and the Spirit. *The flesh*, says Paul, *lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other*. Do we then find within us such a contest as is here described? Do we find it daily there and to continue month after month and year after year? Do we find a new principle one that did not always exist within us quarreling with our corrupt native dispositions. The former prompting us to pray and repent and be active in the service of Christ humble and gentle and forgiving toward others while the latter hangs like a dead weight upon our affections and our exertions so that we cannot do the things that we would? Whoever is not sensible of such a contest within him has no evidence of his Christian character.

A last effect of spiritual love I shall mention that it produces an increase in the heart and life of all the graces and exercises that have been pointed out. The Christian who is really born of God finds every returning year his relish for spiritual objects to have taken a firmer hold of his heart. The name and character of God and of Christ and the Holy Spirit are clearer to him than before and so is the character of his brethren who have drunk into the same Spirit and his relish and reverence for the holy scriptures continues to increase. His love also for the ordinances of religion are upon the increase. Secret prayer and also family social and public prayer become yearly more precious to him and he is more exact in attending to them. His humility and gentleness and feeling of forgiveness and more apparent uniform and operative. His exertions in the cause of Christ are more extensive his characters more liberal and his prayers for Zion's prosperity more fervent. He continues to groan more and more under the warfare between flesh and Spirit within him not because sin becomes stronger but because he becomes more sensible of its deformity and hates it with a more perfect hatred. He may indeed have reasons long and painful of distressing doubt and darkness - he may lose some of the favours of his first loves: but upon the whole he will find a more calm steady frame of mind. A stronger faith in God and a more active Spirit of exertion in the cause of his Master. And there can be no better evidence of real vital godliness than

this perseverance in holiness in this increase of religious feeling and action.

My hearers it has been my object today to assist you in determining whether you are ripening for heaven or hell. And I now close by summing up the false and the true evidences of regeneration. Do we suppose ourselves to be regenerated because at a certain period we had deep and pungent convictions for him – or because we were brought to acknowledge the justice of God in casting us away forever or because our impressions were sometimes so powerful that we were compelled to cry aloud or fall down in a swoon or because after a season a remarkable joy broke in upon our souls and the mercy of God and the character of God appear full of glory and Christ seemed lovely and the bible a new book and Christians new beings and the world a new world. Or do we suppose ourselves born of God because a tenet of scripture came suddenly upon us while we were careless and almost overwhelmed us or because another text brought with a sudden relief and rapturous joy - or because we have been suspiciously exact in performing the external duties of religion and morality or because our souls are full of zeal in the cause of Christ or because we are suffering persecution or because our most judicious Christian friends have no doubt of our piety? Are we resting on any of these evidences as proof of Christian character? My brethren though many of these are Christian exercises and actions yet they are also the feelings and the dreads of apostates and therefore it is unsafe to rely upon them in a matter of such vast importance especially when abundance of more conclusive proof is at hand. Do we then find ourselves to relish spiritual objects? Does the character of God in itself appear to us to be lovely? Do we feel an attachment to it and to the character of Christ and the character of the Holy Spirit? Do we love those who are most unloved those who are most imminent for prayer and holiness and devotion to Christ. We heartily relish the bible and love all the truths it contains and actually endeavor to make it the constant rule of our lives? Do we love the ordinances of religion the Sabbath - public worship - the social prayer meeting - the sacraments of the Lord's supper? Do we pray and do we love to pray - is it pleasant to pray - should we pray if we could go to heaven without it - in the family and in our closets? Do we do this daily and regularly? Do we feel a spirit of deep humility before God and man - are we gentle towards all men and do we feel a forgiving spirit towards our enemies? And do we daily take up the cross and follow Christ? Do we give up our substance to promote his cause? Are we active for religion? Do we feel within us a contest between the old and the new man - the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh? And finally do we love and value God and Christ and the Spirit and the brethren and the scriptures and the ordinances better than we did? Do we love prayer more than formerly and are we more active for Christ and more humble and watchful? These my hearers are the genuine evidences of regeneration. If these things be in us and about us we need not fear but that we are united to Christ by a living faith. These are evidences that will not fail us when most we need them in the hour of death and in the day of judgment. And as these evidences have been repeated and explained in your hearing my audience what answer has conscience given to them? What report does Gabriel this day to heaven of the state of your heart? Where does he put down your name today in the record of heaven - among the friends or the enemies of God? In one or the other of these columns depend upon it they are written. We may not know one another's character, we may not know our own character: back to the eye of God are the true state of our hearts is visible and we are all known by him either as his friends - his children regenerated by the Spirit - reconciled through the blood of his Son - heirs to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading and having our names written in the Lamb's book of life never to be blotted out or we are known as his enemies clad in the armor of rebellion – defying by their conduct the omnipotent God - having our eyes sealed in the slumber of spiritual death - over whom the two-edged sword of his broken law hangs suspended by a hair - on whom there rests the unatoned curse of the law with whom God is angry every day - for whom he is whetting his sword and making ready his vow and against whom there is gone forth from the councils of heaven a decree of everlasting banishment and everlasting destruction and for whom the undying

hungry worm is waiting and the unquenchable fire is already kindling. Yes this wide this awful difference exists in the characters of the penitent and impenitent in this place and in this house and God knows who the penitent are and he knows too who the impenitent are. And let us too apply the test that we may know whether we are regenerate or the unregenerate. If we find on examination that we bear about us the marks of the friend of holiness let us thank God and take courage. But if we find that none of the evidences of piety justly belong to us I urge such an one by the terrors of the Lord to give himself no rest until he has made his peace with God. By the records of heaven where is entered a decree of eternal death against him by the coming day of judgment - by the world on fire - by the sword of the Almighty that is ready to fall upon him - by the arrow that is on the string pointing at his heart by the lake of fire and brimstone by the malice of hell which is waiting to torment him - by the mustering vengeance of Jehovah - by the wine press of the forgiveness and wrath of Almighty God - by the gathering storm of eternal wrath ready to burst upon him I warn him to prepare to meet his God.

Delivered

At Conway July 1822

At Whately April 1843

## Sermon 125 Election

[Sermon No. 125, "Election," Isaiah 64:8, 1822 Sep,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 7]

Isaiah 64:8

*We are the clay and thou our potter.*

*[The Calvinist principle of election was very controversial, even in Hitchcock's day.]*

The subject I am chosen for discussion this morning (afternoon) my hearers is one against which there exists a strong prejudice and antipathy in the human mind. It is the doctrine of election: and the bare mention of it often excites in the bosoms of some hearers a regret that the preacher should engage in a subject so deep and difficult and unprofitable while others find a positive disgust excited within them at the term election and very few only feel willing to have it made a theme of pulpit discussion. I am well aware how strongly are these feelings of disapprobation and disgust and how they close the judgment against an impartial hearing - for my own experience has often testified to their power. What reason then have I to hope that you my audience will give me an unprejudiced hearing at this time: or that any good will result from a discourse on this subject? Perhaps I have no reason to expect that a single prejudice will be softened or a single judgment convinced of the truth of what I am about to present. Yet if election be a doctrine of scripture the minister of Christ is to preach it and have the consequences with God. And my sole object at this time is to enquire whether it be a doctrine of scripture or not. I am not going to amuse you with metaphysical disquisitions on the point: although there is a strong temptation to indulge in this. But I strongly suspect that such a course rather tends to perplex than to convince or enlighten. The truth is it is a deep and difficult subject and I had almost said none but God can explain it. He alone knows the best mode of treating it. And in his word he has discussed it and with that discussion we ought to be satisfied. If ever I felt an earnest desire to present before you the exact meaning of scripture among doctrines I certainly have that feeling now in regard to election. I pray God I may be enabled to bring the doctrine before you precisely as it is exhibited by those who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost neither adding thereto or diminishing therefrom one iota. In order to obtain the precise meaning of the bible concerning this doctrine and on account of the prejudices that exist against it I shall not pursue at this time the ordinary course of sermonizing that is I shall not first lay down certain propositions and then proceed to prove them: but shall invert this order and first bring forward certain classes of texts and then see what is the amount of their meaning. For the truth is my hearers however strong may be our prejudices on this subject the terms election elect predestinate etc. are scripture terms the very language of the Holy Ghost and they must mean something. And it is presumed that every hearer present who believes the bible to be the word of God will be ready to receive that meaning or reject the whole bible. I cannot believe any one will be guilty of the strange inconsistency of acknowledging that election is a scripture doctrine and yet remain in unbelief concerning it. For if this doctrine be a doctrine of scripture there is as much presumption in disbelieving as in disbelieving the existence of God. For on what ground is it that we presume to say that one truth of revelation is to be believed and another rejected and if I reject one truth which I acknowledge to be in scripture another man has the same right to reject another which is found there.

I cannot avoid remarking here however that on the other hand it is probable many others push this

doctrine of election too far that is farther than the scriptures do. They start with the general doctrine contained in the bible but are not willing to rest there. They must reason upon it and they fancy they discover new consequences and thus are they lead to form views of this point which are utterly repugnant to other declarations of scripture. I acknowledge indeed that every view of this doctrine is encumbered with difficulties. Take for instance the declaration of scripture *whosoever will may come in and take of the waters of life freely and no man can come into Christ except the Father chose him*, and the mind perceives a difficulty in reconciling these discrete declarations. But the fact that both of them are the words of God ought to silence our objections and cause us to believe that had we the capacity of Gabriel we should find less difficulty here and that had we omniscience all apparent opposition would cease. This apparent discrepancy between the language of scripture has in my opinion been in many instances increased by the reasonings and speculations of man. It appears to me certain that the doctrine of election as taught in the bible is perfectly consistent with the free agency of man - that it renders no sinner less guilty in the sight of God - that it does not throw a bar in the way of any one's coming to Christ - that it does not render the use of means unnecessary and if any perish finally they will blame themselves as much as if no such decree ever existed. It may be said that there is certainly an apparent contradiction between election and these declarations. But I do not believe there is any real contradiction not because I can reconcile them by my speculations but because the word of God plainly asserting both sides implies that they are reconcilable.

But to waive all further preliminary remarks let us proceed to enquire what the bible teaches concerning the doctrine of election?

And first does it teach the doctrine at all? After hearing some text you will perhaps be able to decide.

The text and context may here be mentioned. *But now O Lord*, says Isaac in the name of the Jews, *thou are our Father: we are the clay and thou our potter and we are all the works of thy hand*. In another chapter God himself is described as speaking and saying *Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What maketh thou? Or thy work, He hath no hands?* In the next chapter God also says *my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure*. These texts however imply merely that God acts as a sovereign in the creation of the universe and that he had a purpose or design in every work of his hands. Something more particular must be added now in order to prove what is commonly understood by election.

We know says Paul that *all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called; and whom he called them he also justified and them he justified he also glorified*. To the Ephesians Paul writes, *According as God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love being predestinated according to the good pleasure of his will*. Many more passages might be adduced similar to these: but there are none plainer on the subject than these. And now I ask not what a man could make them mean by applying to them the ingenuities of criticism but what do they mean in the view of a plain unprejudiced man of good common sense? Here appears no ambiguity of language but the sentiment is exhibited remarkably distinct. And certainly these passages must mean that all Christians were chosen or elected by God in the councils of eternity. In the first passage above quoted Paul was discussing a subject that did not apply to one Christian more than another and it seems exceedingly unnatural as some have understood it to apply the passage to the Jews where nothing is said about the Jews in the whole chapter and it is certain that all the Jews were not glorified as is here said to be the

case with those predestinated. To predestinate certainly means to determine before hand - God therefore had determined beforehand to save just so many as will finally be saved. If this be not the meaning of the text just recited I certainly feel incompetent to attach any meaning to them. Whatever therefore are our prejudices it would seem we must allow there is in the bible such a doctrine as election or predestination. Let it be kept in mind that the question I am examining is not whether this be an absurd doctrine but merely whether it be found in the bible.

But in the second place does not this doctrine mean merely an election to certain temporal privileges and not to everlasting life? This question leads to the examination of another class of texts. The first of those just cited may here however be repeated: *Whom he did foreknow, etc.* It would seem from this that every individual who was foreknown was predestinated and called and justified and glorified that is no doubt admitted to heaven. Is not this my hearers the most exact meaning of the passage?

The next passage is from the Epistle of Peter. *Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. grace onto you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.* There can surely be no doubt but the election here spoken of was an election to everlasting glory in heaven. We quote one more passage from the words of our Saviour. *This is the Father's will which hath sent me, says he, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day.* Now who are these the father has given to Christ if they be not the elect?

In the third place I enquire whether the foreseen good works of the righteous are not the ground or procuring cause of their election? Did not God choose them to salvation because he foresaw they would perform his will? This enquiry leads us to look at another class of texts.

The subject seems to be taken up by Paul in the 9<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Romans in which he is treating of the rejection of the great body of the Jewish nation and of the remnant that remain faithful according to election. He points us back to the two children of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, as illustrations of the sovereign election of God. *When Rebecca also, says he, had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac (For the children being not yet born neither having done any good or evil that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works but of him that calleth), it was said unto her that the elder shalt serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* The case of Jacob and Esau which was originally an election to temporal privileges although the possession or loss of their privileges involved eternal consequences seems to have been chosen by Paul to illustrate a general principle of God's dealings with men, viz. that *it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth but of God that sheweth mercy.* And does not this declaration clearly imply that it was not on account of any foreseen good did desires or works in man that some of them were chosen for salvation? If this be not the force of the passage I can see no force or meaning in it.

Let us quote another passage from Romans. *Even so then, says Paul after referring to the case of Elijah, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace then it is no*

*more of works otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works then it is no more of grace otherwise works is no more works. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for. But the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded.* It seems from this passage that we must either believe that the foreseen good works of Christians were not the ground or procuring cause of their election or deny that men are saved by grace. And to deny this to reject the uniform testimony of scripture which declaring *By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God.*

*[Very small text at bottom of page]*

Not of works test any many more should best. For nay are his workmanship created in him unto good works unto God works which God hath before ordained we should walk in them)

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. That being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

But in the fourth place had God no reference to the good works of Christians in their election? To answer this enquiry let us appeal again to scripture.

*Known unto God, says Peter, are all his works from the beginning.* The good deeds of Christians therefore being a part of his work were foreknown by him. And Paul tells us *whom he did foreknow them he did predestinate.* This declaration teaches us that there is an agreement a coincidence between foreknowledge and predestination - that is none are predestinated who are not foreknown to be holy. This also accords with the tenor of scripture in which we are every where taught that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* To the Thessalonians Paul says, *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.* The sanctification of the elect Christians and their belief of the truth was as much decreed by God as their salvation. That is to say if God is determined to save a certain number of the human race he has also determined that they shall be prepared for heaven by his Spirit by his word and by the means of grace. So that the common objection that if a man be elected he will be saved do what he may does not apply at all to the scripture view of this doctrine. It is still strictly true of such a man that except he repent and become holy he must perish.

And here are we reminded of an occurrence during the shipwreck of Paul. *After long abstinence, you recollect, Paul stood in the midst of the crew and said - be of good cheer for that shall be no loss of any man's life among you but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God.* Here we perceive God had determined that this crew should be saved and yet only a short time after when the sailors were about escaping from the ship. *Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved.* Surely then there is nothing in the doctrine of election that should prevent the ministers of Christ from saying to the unregenerate *except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* And also to exhort Christians not to ruin the grace of God in vain.

In the fifth place if the good works of believers be not the ground of their election what is the ground? Let us see if the bible decides this question.

*Having predestinated us, says Paul to the Ephesians unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to*



*himself according to the good pleasure of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we also have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will.* To Timothy he says *God has saved us and called us with a holy calling not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.* Of his own will says James he begat us with the word of truth that he should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. The purpose the will or the pleasure of God seems in these passages to be described as the ground of the election of believers. And although God always asks from the best reasons yet he does not in all cases think proper to reveal them. These passages of scripture speak the same language as those just quoted. *The sons of God, says John, were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.* We might here also address a large part of 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans *The children being not yet born neither having done any good or evil that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth. To them it is not of him that willeth but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh even for this same purpose have I raised thee up that I might show my power in thee in that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth.* Every thing relating to the subject is here most evidently reframed to the sovereign will of God - and may we my hearers be disposed with Christ on the same subject to say *Even so Father for so it seemeth good in thy sight.* O that we all had this humble acquiescing spirit of the Saviour! That it was God's will was enough to satisfy him - and it should satisfy us even if he conceal the reasons of his conduct.

But in the sixth place is it meant by election that a certain definite number of mankind are chosen to salvation while the rest are left to perish? To give an answer to this enquiry we resort once more to the law and the testimony.

And here the passage often quoted occurs to us *whom he did foreknow he did predestinate.* It is obvious from this text that God must have foreknown the very individuals and every one of them whom he predestinated - and if so he predestinated a certain definite number and unless there are some Christians whom he did not foreknow the rest were left to follow their chosen way to perdition. We quote again another passage in Romans on this point: *Even at this present time, says Paul, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. What then Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded.* God must have known the individuals of this remnant - he must have known also the individuals who were blinded - and both these must have been a definite number. Yet it may be said that this passage refers solely to the Jews. It does so: yet a general principle is involved but not to spend time in answering such an objection let me refer to another passage. *What if God willing to shew his wrath and make his powers known endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath filled to destruction. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had after prepared into glory? Even us whom he hath called not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles.* Here the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy included it is obvious the whole human family - and the number of each class must have been definite and fixed. When the apostles preached in Antioch it is said that *as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* And Christ must have known the individuals for whom he prayed when he said, *I pray for them: I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me: for they are thine.*

This my hearers if I am not mistaken is what the bible teaches concerning election. Whatever we may think of the doctrine it seems difficult to read the scriptures candidly and prayerfully without being satisfied that such a doctrine is contained in them. And is it not evident from the text that have been adduced that it is not merely an election to temporal privileges but to everlasting life - that the foreseen

good works of the elect were not the procuring cause of their being chosen - although none are elected who do not bring forth works meet for repentance - that the ground of the selection is the sovereign will or pleasure or purpose of God and that a certain definite number are chosen in the councils of eternity. If the bible does not mean as much as this I know not what it does mean. No doubt however many find a multitude of difficulties and objections rising within them against such a view of the subject. All these objections however may be resolved into two. First it is said that for God to select one and leave another of the same character is the height of injustice. Were I left to my own reasonings to answer this objection I confess I should feel totally inadequate to the task: but we have reason to be thankful that this very difficulty is answered in the bible by the Spirit of God. Paul in considering the subject of election introduces for illustration and has been already mentioned the case of Jacob and Esau. Says he when Rebecca had conceived by one even by our father Isaac (For the children being not yet born neither having done any good or evil that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works of him that calleth). It was said unto her the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated. These objections we have just mentioned occur to the Apostle. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Mark now his answer - God forbid. For he saith to Moses I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh for this same purpose have I raised thee up that I might show my power in thee and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth. This is the reply and the only reply which God has given to this objection.

The second objection may be thus stated. If God selects some of the human race and declares that they shall be saved and leaves others to go to destruction. Then those thus left can be in no degree to blame for continuing in sin since they are not elected and must perish do what they will. Happily this objection also is answered by the apostle. It seems there were some in his days who found exactly the same difficulty in the way of and embracing the doctrine of election. After having uttered the conclusion just written Paul in the next verse brings forward his objection: *Thou wilt say then unto me why doth he yet find fault? For who have resisted his will?* Let the reply of the apostle sink deep into our hearts. *Nay, but O man who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing found say to him that found it Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God willing to show his wrath and to make his power known endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory. Even us whom he hath called not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles?*

Perhaps such a reply does not satisfy the objection. But he ought to remember it is all the answer they thought proper to give who spake as they were now by the Holy Ghost – and after God has thus spoken would it not be the height of presumption in me to add any of my own meanings with an expectation of clearing up the difficulty?

And now my hearers the subject is before you. But ere I close I have one request to make. If there be any who find the sentiment of this discourse to be hard sayings I would entreat them before they resolve to reject the doctrine to go into their closets and there pray over the texts that have been adduced in this discourse. Especially let them read alternately the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans and the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Ephesians without note or comment and pray earnestly over them that God would grant them wisdom to understand the exact meaning of those chapters and that he would subdue any prejudice that may exist in their hearts against the truth. And let them not leave their closets nor leave

off praying until they can tell what those chapters do mean if they do not teach the doctrine of election. Such a course is certainly scriptural and reasonable and it is the only one that will offer consolation in a dying hour. Let none of us therefore reject the doctrine of this discourse until he has adopted it. And may God *open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of his law.*

Delivered

At Conway September 1822

At Ashfield September 1824

## Sermon 128 Noachian Deluge

[Sermon No. 128, "Noachian Deluge," II Peter 2:5, 1823 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 7]

### II Peter 2-5

*And spared not the old world but saved Noah the eighth person a preacher of righteousness,  
bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.*

*[Multiple scripture passages in paragraphs 2-5 are not shown in quotes; some are loosely translated or interspersed with his own words. In paragraphs 10-15 Hitchcock uses a lot of material from his review of Buckland's Reliquiae Diluvianae. He draws much material from "heathen and barbarian" sources and suggests they confirm the biblical story. See paragraph 7 if Noah's account were "fabulous". Note the passage, Whence came these numerous worn and rounded masses of stone which are scattered over the tops of our highest hills and mountains?]*

The particular object for which the apostle referred to this piece of history will appear in the latter part of this discourse. In the former part it I propose to exhibit before you the history of the flood of Noah and from it to deduce some practical reflections. Permit me to read the history of this deluge as it is given by Moses.

And God said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood. And behold I even I do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant, and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons and thy wife and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee and them. Thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark the male and the female as God had commanded. And it came to pass after seven days that the water of the floor were upon the earth.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life in the second month the seventeenth day of the month the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth for forty days and forty nights. In the self same day entered Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth the sons of Noah and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them into the ark. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth. And all the high hills that were under the

whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upriver did the waters prevail and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth both of fowl and of cattle and of beast and of every creeping thing that creepeth up upon the earth and every man. And Noah only remained alive and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days. And God remembered Noah and every living thing and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth and the waters assuaged: and the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters returned from off the earth continually and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month on the seventeenth day of the month upon the mountain of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month on the first day of the month were the tops of the mountains seen. And it came to pass at the end of forty days that Noah opened the windows of the ark which he had made. And he sent forth a raven which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from the earth. Also he sent forth set a dove from him to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot and she returned unto him into the ark for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. Then he pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came unto him in the evening and lo in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off. So Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed another seven days and set forth the dove which returned not again to him any more. And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year in the first month the first day of the month the waters were dried up from the earth. And Noah went forth and his sons and his wife and his sons wives with him. Every beast every creeping thing and every fowl whatsoever creepeth upon the earth after their kinds went forth out of the ark. And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord and took every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Such is the simple and minute account of the deluge by Moses. Every part of it is too easily understood to demand any explanation. I proceed therefore to deduce some inferences from this interesting piece of history.

And first we derive from the Mosaic history of the deluge strong evidence of the authenticity and inspiration of the Books of Moses.

Moses here describes definitely and particularly an event of no ordinary magnitude and one that is calculated to make a deep impression on all who survived the awful catastrophe. But of the many millions that then probably inhabited the world only eight persons were saved. And when they came forth out of the ark to repopulate the desolate world again and again they would repeat the wonderful history to their children and point out to them on every side evidences of the awful ruin God had brought upon the world for their sins. And it would seem scarcely possible however sunk and debased man might become in succeeding generations it would seem hardly possible that the traditions of a deluge could ever be lost. We might reasonably expect to find traces of it at least in the oral and written history of every nation and tribe. An interesting question then occurs whether such a tradition is preserved in the records of the globe? If on searching the histories and traditions of man we find traces of such a grand catastrophe the conclusion will be forced upon us that the Mosaic account is authentic but if in these histories no references is found to such an event the presumption will be strong that Moses's account is fabulous. Permit me then to deduce from the history of the heathen certain facts on the subject.

When we examine the accounts of the heathen gods and goddesses of ancient times we find allusions to

the history of the flood in great abundance. There can be little doubt but Noah was worshipped among idolaters under a great variety of names and characters. Traces of this worship are distinctly discernible in the history and character of the Grecian Deucalion, Atlas, and Jupiter – in the Egyptian Isis, Osiris, Sesostris, Oannes, Syphon, etc., in the Phoenician Dagon, Agruerus, Sydyck, etc., in the Assyrian Astante Dercete, etc., and in the Hindoo Budda, Menu, Vishnoo, etc., in the Chinese Fohi and a God sitting upon the lotos in the midst of the waters; and in the Japanese Bud and Jakusi, etc., etc. The numerous seasons rendering these assertions probable cannot be here presented: but there are plain naked facts enough within our reach we pass by these allusions. [*From Review of Buckland's Reliquiae Diluvianae*]

Josephus asserts that the deluge and the ark are mention by all who have written barbarian or heathen histories. One author as he affirms declares that a part of the ark yet remains upon a mountain in Armenia. Another writer he says asserts that many persons upon the approach of the deluge led to a mountain in Armenia and were preserved. One in particular was carried in an ark to the very summit of the mountain and a part of the vessel still remains.

Milo a bitter enemy of the Jews and consequently to their scriptures takes notice of the person who with his sons was saved from the flood. And Abydenus after giving an account of the deluge from which Xisuthrus the Chaldean Noah was saved observes that the ark first rested on the mountains of Armenia. Berossus another writer relates that this deluge happened in the days of king Xisuthrus who was the tenth in descent from the first created man that Xisuthrus was warned in a dream of the approaching catastrophe was commanded to build a ship and embark in it with his wife children and friends after furnishing it with provisions and putting into it several birds and four footed beasts. After the flood began to abate Xisuthrus sent out some of the birds which finding no land immediately returned with their feet covered with mud. And sending them forth again they returned no more. After this he himself disembarked built an altar adored the earth and sacrificed to the gods.

Among the Egyptians was a tradition that their god Osiris was on one occasion forced into an ark which closing upon him floated down the Nile into the sea. And it is a curious fact that he is said to have entered the ark on the very day which Moses declares did, viz. Sunday, Nov. 30.

There Persians preserve a tradition of a deluge which some among them said was occasioned by the wickedness of one Maleus. And one of their authors speaks of Noah himself as having dwelt in one of the mountains from which the waters burst forth.

The Grecian account of the flood of Deucalion is well-known. Lucian, a derider of all religions, describes it as taking place in consequence of the wickedness of the antediluvians and states that Deucalion in consequence of his piety was warned to enter the ark with his sons and their wives – that immediately all animals on earth came to him by pairs – that suddenly the earth poured forth an immense quantity of water and the rain descended in torrents so that *all things became water* and that the ark rode in safety till the flood has subsided. The dove is mentioned by Plutarch as sent out of the ark by Deucalion.

The Hindoo account of the deluge is given by Sir William Jones. According to them at a certain period the whole race became corrupt except eight. So one of these their God Vishnu appeared in the form of a fish and told him that in seven days all creatures who had offended him would be destroyed by a deluge - but that he should be preserved in a capacious vessel formed miraculously and he was directed to take the seven other holy men on earth with their respective wives and pairs of all animals and all kinds of medicines and esculent grain for food and enter the ark. After seven days the ocean began to overflow and this holy man saw a large vessel moving on the waters and having in all respects complied with the

directions of the God he entered it – and the God in the form of the vast fish suffered it to be tied by a huge serpent to the measureless horn. Several other visionary notions are added to this account which it is unnecessary to repeat.

In the most ancient of the Chinese books the Emperor Yao is said to have let loose the waters of the ocean in this manner. *Having raised himself to heaven Yao bathed the feet even of the highest mountain covered the less elevated hills and rendered the plains impassable.*

Let me now pass to the American continent and enquire whether any trace of a deluge can be found among the habitations of the Indians of the forest.

The original inhabitants of the island of Cuba are said to have believed that *the world was once destroyed by water by three persons and they have a tradition that an old man knowing of the approaching deluge built a large ship and went into it with a great number of animals: and that he sent out from the ship a crow which did not forthwith return staying a time to feed on the carcasses of animals but afterwards came back with a green branch in its mouth.*

The inhabitants of Castella del Oro in Terra Simon in S. American believe that during a universal deluge one man only with his children escaped in a canoe from whom the world was reseeded.

The Peruvians maintain that a universal destruction of the human species took place by an inundation except a few persons who escaped into caves in the tops of the mountains whither they had previously conveyed provisions and animals. Others among them affirm that six persons only were saved on a float or raft.

The Brazilians preserve a tradition of a deluge from which some say only one man other than two brothers with their wives were saved by climbing the highest trees on the mountains: and these events are celebrated in their religious songs.

The Mexicans speak of a deluge in their country by which all men were destroyed and it was repopulated by a river miraculously coming out of the lake. Another tribe maintains that a single family were preserved in an ark and animals enough to stock the new world. While in ark several ravens were sent out one which brought back the branch of a tree.

The Iroquois Indians say that Akron a spirit created the world and another called Messou repaired it after the deluge.

And finally the remote inhabitants of Otaheite being asked concerning their origins replied that their supreme god a long time ago being angry dragged the earth through the sea when their island was broken off and preserved.

Such are the histories and traditions concerning a deluge that are found in almost every quarter of the globe. And among much that is obviously fabulous we find the following facts which coincide with the Mosaic account of Noah's deluge.

1. The earth at some remote period has been destroyed by a flood of waters.
2. This catastrophe happened in consequence of the wickedness of mankind.
3. One man for his purity was supernaturally warned of the coming calamity.
4. His warning was seven days before the event.
5. He was directed to

build an ark and enter it with his sons and their wives. 6. A pair of every living creature came into the ark. 7. This man was directed to lay in a store of provisions in the ark. 8. He entered the ark on Sunday, November 30. 9. The deluge was produced by long rain and the pouring fourth of torrents from the earth or deep. 10. The men saved in the ark sent forth after a time a raven. 11. He sent forth a dove which returned without finding any resting place. 12. He sent her forth again and she returned with the branch of a tree. 13. The ark rested at length on a mountain in Armenia. 14. The man with his family on the coming out of the ark built an altar and offered burnt sacrifice. 15. He was tenth in descent from the first creature man.

And here let it be remembered that these various nations and tribes have been entirely ignorant of the Old Testament of the Jews but also of the opinions of one another on this subject. Nay in most instances they have not even committed their ideas concerning the deluge to writing. What then is the conclusion from the fact that we find the history of a deluge among all nations learned and ignorant savage and civilized? Does it not plainly evince that these traditions have a foundation in truth? Does it not point us to a common origin for them all - does it not prove the account of Moses is true? Or if we suppose it possible that the tradition of the general fact might thus exist in every part of the earth and yet have no foundation truth how can we account for it that so many minute particulars in these traditions and histories coincide so exactly with those related by Moses? A man must be exceedingly warped by prejudice and a wicked heart who does not see in this coincidence conclusive evidence that the account given by Moses is true. It is indeed the united testimony of every nation and tribe and language under heaven to the truth of the Mosaic account.

In all the accounts above given of the deluge collected from the four quarters of the globe we perceive with some truth many circumstances most evidently fabulous. But we perceive in Moses history of the same event nothing vile or extravagant. All appears to be truth and consistency. How can this be accounted except by supposing that Moses wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

But my hearers we need not search the words of the heathen for proof of a former deluge. We have proof of it all around us in our everyday excursions. Whence came these numerous worn and rounded masses of stone which are scattered over the tops of our highest hills and mountains? Surely no river could have conveyed them thither. Nothing will account for their situation but an universal deluge. Let the unbeliever then remember that as he passes over our hills the very stones cry out against him.

The second remark I have to make in view of the history of the Noachian deluge is that the salvation of Noah in the ark is a striking emblem of the salvation of the Christian by the Savior Jesus Christ.

I do not mean that God brought the flood on the world in order to prefigure by the deliverance of Noah the rescue of Christians from sin. But there is an accidental and interesting resemblance in the cases. The ark saved Noah no from being buried in the waters of the deluge- and Christ saves the believer from the drowning floods of sin and the still more dreadful floods of divine wrath. The ark was the only place of security for Noah - the only refuge from the wide wasting deluge. *And there is one other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus.* In the ark Noah was separated from the world. So the man who dwells in Christ will be separated from the world and allowed not to touch the unclean thing. In the ark were all the holy persons to be found in the antediluvian world. So in Christ Jesus all are found who love God - *for no man cometh to the father but by him.* None entered the ark except those whom God specially named and called into it. So no man enters *the ark of Christ Jesus except their Father who hath sent him (me) draw him.* In the ark Noah was perfectly safe and secure from the waves and storms that beat upon the world. So the believer is safe in



Christ amid all the tempests and floods that roar around him and engulf [????] multitudes.

On these several points of resemblance I have no time to enlarge - but I cannot conclude without saying that the destruction of the antediluvian world by the flood of Noah is a striking emblem of the final ruin of the wicked.

For 120 years Noah preached righteousness to a wicked world around him. He warned them to repent and told them in the name and by the authority of Almighty God that soon the overwhelming deluge would destroy them except they repented and to manifest to them his firm faith in the prediction all this time he continued to build an ark before their eyes. But it does not appear that all his warnings and exhortations were the means of the conversion of one soul. The antediluvian no doubt regarded him as a deluded fanatic - as they were too much occupied in their worldly pursuits to listen to his admonitions. But when they saw the rain descending and the waters gushing in in torrents from the fountains of the great deep when the flowed over the vallies and bore them to the mountains then oh then they remembered the ravings of the man of God. See them as the rising waters force them higher and higher up the mountain side. How they look wildly around for help - but the flood swells and swells around them and hope dies in their hearts. And now they see at a the ark borne up on the bosom of the waters and riding securely with the happy Noah whose warnings they have despised. But ah! the doors are shut - to be opened to them no more. And see them as the flood drives them to the pinnacle of the mountain. Frantic with despair - hear their mingled prayers and curses - until a swirling wave sweeps them all away and they choke and struggle and finally sink in the muddy waters never to rise again.

In every Gospel land impenitent men are told from Sabbath to Sabbath of a flood much more awful that is erelong upon the world of the ungodly - even a flood of fire and brimstone. They are told too that an ark is provided for their security and that the doors of it are now standing wide open to admit them. But soon they will be closed by one who shutteth and no man openeth. But few are there who believe any thing of all this. The faithful minister who preaches righteousness is regarded as preacher or terror - an honest but a deluded man. And the very men over whose heads the clouds are gathering that are to rain upon them a storm of eternal wrath live on indulging a fateful and delusive dream that they are safe and they cling to the world as if that could save them. But the ruin of those who entered not the ark of Noah is no more certain than the destruction of those who enter not the ark of Christ Jesus. *For if God spared not the angels that sinned but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment: and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them ensamples unto those that after should live ungodly. And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.* It is the same unchangeable God who brought in a flood upon the antediluvian and a storm of fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah and who now has sworn by himself that he will bury the impenitent of this generation in the fiery floods of hell. He was long suffering in the days of Noah - he is long suffering now. But he executed his threatenings then and he will execute it now. *And as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat they drank they married wives they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat they drank they bought they sold they planted they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day where the Son of Man is revealed.* In that dreadful day impenitent sinners you who now turn a deaf ear to the warnings of God's word - you who neglect the blood of a Saviour - in that day how dreadful will be your condition.

Methinks I see you looking now in wild awful amazement and despair as you feel the earth trembling under your feet - and see the heavens in a blaze and the Lord Jesus descending clothed in flaming fire to take vengeance on his enemies. I hear your shrieking voices calling on the mountains to fall on you and hide you from the wrath of the Lamb. I see the agony of your souls as you look up amid that tremendous scene and see the saints whose names you have despised now safely riding above the storm in the ark of safety. And methinks I see the fiery ocean of almighty water engulfing your soul and sweeping you away into the abyss of blackness of darkness forever.

Sinners around me in the name and by the authority of Almighty God I declare unto you that the ark of salvation is now waiting with open doors to receive you and if you will enter there you will be safe and blessed forever. By the authority of the same Almighty God I also declare unto you that the forbearance of God is almost exhausted and that soon that door will be closed and barred against you forever - and Oh dreadful thought - except you speedily repent the [????] of his indignation will roll in everlasting succession over your ruined soul.

*[Additional page, a poem?]*

1. The deluge at the Almighty's call.

In what impetuous streams it fell  
Swallowed the mountains in its rage.  
And swept a guilty world to hell.

2. In vain the tallest sons of pride

Fled from the close pursuing wave  
Nor could the mightiest towers defend  
Now swiftness 'scape, nor courage save

3. How dire the wreck! How loud the roar!

How shrill the universal cry  
Of millions in the last despair,  
Reechoed from the lowering sky!

4. Yet Noah, humble happy saint

Surrounded with the chosen few  
Sat in his ark, secure from fear  
And sang the grace that steer'd them through.

5. So may I sing in Jesus safe,

While storms of vengeance round me fall,  
Conscious now high my hopes are fixed,  
Beyond what shakes this earthly ball.

6. Enter thine ark, while patience waits,

Nor ever quit that sure retreat:  
Then the wide flood, that buries earth,  
Shall waft thee to a fairer seat.

7. Nor wreck nor ruin there is seen;

There not a wave of trouble rolls;  
But the bright rainbow round the throne  
Seals endless life to all their souls.      *[Hymn by Philip Doddridge, 1791]*

Delivered

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At Mount Pleasant February 1831

## Sermon 129 Way to Zion

[Sermon No. 129, "Way to Zion," Jeremiah 50:5, 1822 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 7]

Jeremiah 50:5

*They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward.*

*[This sermon seems to be a parody of Pilgrim's Progress or a Greek myth.]*

The Mount Zion so frequently mentioned in the old testament with one or two exceptions was the highest of those hills on which Jerusalem was built. Hence it is often put for the whole city. And as this was a type of the church of God the church on earth and in heaven is often called Zion - and even heaven itself is thus denominated. *Ye are come*, says Paul, *unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God - the heavenly Jerusalem. And I looked*, says John, *and lo a Lamb stood on Mount Zion and with him a hundred forty and four thousand having his father's name written in their foreheads.* In the text it may be doubtful perhaps whether Zion represents Jerusalem or the true church on earth or the heavenly Jerusalem. The Jews are represented by the prophet as turning unto the Lord with renewed zeal. *In those days and in that time saith the Lord the children of Israel shall come they and the children of Judah together going and weeping: they shall go and seek the Lord their God - and they shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward saying com and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.* The only question here seems to be whether this prediction was fulfilled in the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity or whether it refers to their future conversion to Christianity. I shall adopt the latter supposition and consider the text as describing the condition of those who have turned their faces in earnest towards heaven and are enquiring the way thither. And my object in this discourse will be to describe (somewhat in the manner of a much valued though despised writer) the way to Zion - that is the way to heaven.

1. In the first place it leads through the wilderness of this world.

Any condition in which there is much of confusion and disorder may in the language of scripture be denominated wilderness. Such was the Gentile world regarded by the prophet before the light of the Gospel rose upon it. And he describes the effect of this by saying Then shall lead the same man leap as a hart and the tongue of the dumb shall sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons where each lay shall be grass with seeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there and a way and it shall be called the way of holiness. So in a great measure is this world wilderness to the believer and he must urge on his way and the rocks the desert and the drought - with no cheering springs to quench his thirst with no tree of life to overshadow him and drop down its fruits to support him. There are thorns and briars in the moral as well as in the natural world all springing from the same original curse. And from these thorns the Christian although traveling in the way to Zion is not exempt. He often feels them tearing his flesh and retarding his course and showing to him that this world is not the place of his rest. He looks on the right and left of this path but it is dreary to his soul. It is destitute of that which can satisfy his new born nature which pants for nobler food and for purer enjoyments than those he can afford. He finds too many a beast of prey more furious and dreadful than those inhabiting

the natural wilderness who are seeking not to tear his body in pieces but to riot on his soul. He finds the way to Zion a wilderness also because he meets with a few fellow travelers - being compelled to go forward in a path which the multitude avoid. But since these various obstructions remind him that his home is not to be found in such an inhospitable desert they are a powerful stimulus to urge him on to seek an entrance into the heavenly Canaan - the end of his journey. And when the toils and dangers of this passage are all surmounted and he stands on mount Zion above then will he delight to look back and *remember all the way which the Lord his God led him for 20 or 30 or 40 or 50 or 60 or 70 years in the wilderness to humble him and to prove him to know what was in his heart whether he would keep his commandments or no. And how loud will be his song of gratitude and praise to that God who led him through that great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought where there was no water who brought him forth water out of the rock of flint: who fed him in the wilderness with manna that he might humble him and that he might prove him to do him good at the latter end!*

## 2. The way to Zion is straight and narrow.

In this respect it differs from any path that ends in perdition. *Wide is gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth onto life and few there be that find it.* The Christian pilgrim can not turn aside to that right hand or to the left without imminent danger of never regaining the true road to happiness. So numerous are the by paths sin has constructed on either hand - so much plainer and easier do they appear and so much more trodden that the danger is imminent of being led away finally. Like Lot when leaving Sodom the believer is not permitted to look back on the world or to stay in all the plain but like the miserable wife of Lot he be made a monument of God's displeasure. His appetites and inordinate desires are to be confirmed within narrow limits or they will inevitably lead him astray. For narrow is his path that he must walk circumspectly and enquire diligently for the way in which all the redeemed have walked. *Thus saith the Lord stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths where is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your soul.*

## 3. The way to Zion is sometimes rough and difficult and sometimes smooth and easy.

This is the testimony of every saint who has finished his course. All have found an alternation of darkness and light - of difficulty and ease - of pain and comfort. Sometimes the disinclination of their own hearts has hung like a heavy log upon their progress. Sometimes an enticing world on either side of their path who are gliding evenly along has disheartened them from pressing forward. And sometimes the Spirit of God seems to have forsaken them and pressed down under the weight of temptation and trials. They like the children of Israel in the wilderness are *much discouraged because of the way*. The darkness thickens upon them and their path becomes dim and they almost despair of ever reaching the heavenly Zion. Again these clouds disappear - light beaks in upon their course - heaven appears in full view - the way becomes smooth and plain before them - and new vigor urges them forward exulting in the bright hope of the glory which awaits them. Their faith gathers new strength. Satan seems to have departed - the current of their affections runs heavenward and the earth with all its allurements has no charms for them. Then do they realize most forcibly that *wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths peace*. As with David they exclaim, *Return unto thy rest O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee - For thou hast delivered my soul from death mine eyes from tears and my feet from falling*. But after season of this peace and joy the believer again perhaps finds his way difficult and hedged up and his progress almost imperceptible. And thus does he alternate between sorrow and joy - most of the way to Zion. The farther he advances in the (divine life however) in his journey to the skies the more pleasant and easy does his way become and the more rapid is his progress. He finds his vigor

strengthening from month to month and from year to year and the enemies of his soul less desperate and successful in their assaults – and the nearer view he has of heaven inspires him with redoubled ardor to press forward towards the mark for the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

It ought here to be remarked that different Christian travelers find very different degrees of difficulty in their progress. One endeavours to carry with him much of the world and this encumbers him exceedingly. He loads himself with worldly cares or honors or pleasures so heavily that he is borne down by the weight. He finds his feet often entangled so as to fall and he complains much that his flesh is torn by the thorns. After he has been struggling to advance for a long time he finds on looking back that he has made but little progress and when worn out with fatigue he lays himself down to rest. He is astonished on awakening to find that he has lost ground. Ere he is aware of it also he is drawn aside from the true course and wanders a long time in the many paths of sin and sometimes when he comes to a steep and difficult part of the way instead of following the straight and narrow path over the obstacle so heavy is his load that he endeavors to go around it where he is sure to be wounded and ensnared by some enemy who lies in ambush. And all this difficulty and delay he meets with because he still clings to the world and will not leave all for Christ. While another started on the Christian course at the same time outstrips him because he has no such encumbrances and does not endeavor to serve God and Mammon, well knowing that his own heart would be a burden enough to carry and his enemies powerful enough without assisting them. The consequence is that all difficulties give way before him and he passes rapidly and pleasantly onwards toward Zion.

#### 4. The way to Zion is beset with enemies.

Although these enemies are supremely selfish and hostile to one another yet as they all agree in a determination if possible to prevent the Christian from entering heaven they sometimes assault him together and sometimes alone. Along the way that leads to Zion they have made numerous crossroads so artfully constructed as to offer powerful inducements to draw side the unwary traveler and lead him to ruin.

The first of these enemies is Ambition. The road she has constructed is not indeed so alluring at first. But with an ardent and lofty aspect she bids the traveler look forward and see how many places of power and distinction rise conspicuously along its margins where if he will only turn his course he will soon be seated and have every desire of his heart gratified and not be compelled to toil as he now does month after month and year after year without any compensation but neglect and contempt. And if the Christian stay long to listen to these enticements ere he is aware his feet will be torn from the path to heaven.

The traveler is next beset by Fame. Her path too gently ascends – and she bids the pilgrim turn his eyes to the end of it where a lofty and magnificent temple is erected that looks down upon the whole earth in many a name shines forth in golden characters on its pinnacle. She also carries in her hand a silver trumpet and if he will but follow she will lead the way and sound his praises as she passes. And she pours forth a blast so bewitchingly sweet is the sound and so low do admiring courts bend before her that if the believer suffer his eyes to follow her along - if he do not stop his ears to the sound of her trumpet he will forget the way to Zion. For ere long she will convince him that he may follow her for a time without finally losing the straight and narrow way - and when he has acquired a name in the world he can return and render greater service to the cause of religion.

Scarcely has the Christian in his course to heaven escaped the enticements of Fame ere he is accosted

by Pride. She points him to the splendid dwellings and costly equipage to be seen along the path which she declares leads to happiness. And these she promises shall be his if he will turn aside from the obscure way he is now pursuing and follow her. She tells him also how mean is his present appearance and how he is the ridicule of the splendid and the rich - and how contemptible are his fellow travellers. At this moment too Wealth steps forward and seconds the advice of Pride by pointing the traveller to the extensive fields - the rich and the beautiful flocks and lands and the shining heaps of gold which she is ready to bestow upon the pilgrim and which will render him independant. Alas! Here and there do these enchantresses find a traveller to heaven weak enough to listen to the fatal charm and turns aside sacrificing his immortal soul to a phantom!

At the foot of mount self denial over which the trail and narrow way passes the pilgrim meets with Pleasure. There has she constructed her path which gently descends and winds down a delightful valley where every thing that is calculated to interest the sense is to be found. With a soft and gentle address Pleasure solicits the weary pilgrim to attend her down this vale. She does not ask him to relinquish finally his object of advancing in the straight and narrow path to heaven but only to turn for a short time to rest from his fatigue and then resume his journey with a keener relish and a firmer step. She points him to the delightful bowers of repose within her dominions and bids him listen to the sweet music that resounds through the groves. But she conceals the dark caverns where her worn out victims live bound in fetters that can never be broken where the voice of wailing and blasphemy are mingled in horrid discord. *For none that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.*

As the traveler ascends the hill of self denial he meets with another enemy called Sloth. She tells him that his path becomes more and more difficult the higher he ascends and that there is also *a lion in the way* who has torn in pieces many a miserable victim. She tells him also that there is a way that leads round the hill and unites with the straight and narrow path on the opposite side. And if he be persuaded to enter that path he finds it easy and pleasant that sleep overtakes him and he wakes not till a storm arouses him and he has forgotten towards what point to travel.

But if he escape this enemy called Skepticism another accosts him with a sneering and contemptuous look and asks him whether it may not be that he is spending his labors in vain - enquires how he knows that he is not mistaken amid so many crossroads and suggests to him that those on one path are as likely to be right as those on another and that all are equally safe if all are equally sincere - and so advises him to follow his example and take no path at all (and go just where inclination leads).

Soon as he has escaped from Scepticism her sister Philosophy assaults him. By this name I mean false Philosophy: for there is such a thing as a Christian Philosopher.

#### Philosophy Baptized

*In the pure fountain of eternal love  
Has eyes indeed; and viewing all she sees  
As meant to indicate a God to man  
Gives Him His praise and forfeits not her own  
Learning has borne such fruits in other days  
On all her branches: piety has found  
Friends in the friends of science and true prayer  
Has flown from lips wet with the Castalian dews. [Cowper, The Task]*

But False Philosophy stops the Christian traveler and endeavours to persuade him that there is another and an easier path to Zion – that the road he is traveling is obscure and difficult while that she points out is every where pleasant and plain and that he can stop by the way and refresh himself without any danger. The pilgrim tells philosophy that he has with him a plain map of the way and of all the crossroads and he feels certain that he is in the right path and points it out on the map. But Philosophy replies that his map is an old one in which are many errors and that it has been corrected and published anew so as to coincide with her view. And besides all maps are liable to be erroneous it is safer in doubtful cases to rely upon our own wisdom and discernment. The traveler from the outset of his journey had constantly carried with him a cross and he had often when fatigued found great relief in leaning upon it. But Philosophy tells him that this is an useless and unnecessary burden and that he will get forward much easier without it. She requested traveller to cast his eyes upon the path she points out and see how many of the great and learned of the earth are travelling in it and asks whether so much learning and so much candor can be mistaken. This path does indeed seem much easier and smoother to the traveller than the straight and narrow way. But at the end of it he sees a dark valley called the valley of death covered with an impenetrable fog and he enquires of Philosophy how he shall be able to find his way across that gulf to which Philosophy is able to make no reply.

There is one an enemy who follows the Christian through the whole of his journey and lends his assistance to the other enemies that beset him and seeks every opportunity of harassing and deceiving him. It is the Prince of the power of the air: and sometimes he casts a mist before the eye of the believer and hides the view of heaven and all other times he renders more vivid the difficulties and dangers of the way - at the same time throwing a lovelier hue over the sirens of the world that solicit him to turn aside and partake in them. In short he assumes every shape and watches every opportunity and practices a thousand wiles to draw the traveler from the straight and narrow path: and alas his efforts are but too often successful.

But fifthly along the way to Zion there are some friends.

Among the first of these the Christian meets is Meditation. Her aspect is indeed pensive and marked by the furrows of thought but her society is eminently calculated to establish and forward the believer in the way of holiness. She learns him how to detect enemies under the guise of friends – how to baffle the assaults of the adversary and teaches him how liable he is to be led astray if left to himself and hence induces him to have his eyes fixed on God for succor deliverance and direction and on the cross of Christ for the renewal of his strength and on the word of God that he may become better acquainted with the way of life.

Another friend the Christian pilgrim is sure to meet in his journey heavenward is Adversity. When first he meets her the sternness of her aspect and the roughness of her manners causes him to recoil from her. And ere he is aware of it she stretches forth an unfeeling hand and plucks out his right eye and tears from his back a load which he had borne so long and so closely that it could not be separated without tearing his flesh. It consisted of certain worldly cares possessions or honors which the traveller deemed essential to his existence and comfort on his journey. And now that they are so forcibly torn from him he sinks down in pain and despondency. But soon he makes an effort to rise and perceives that now his right eye is gone he no longer sees things double and no one longer endeavours to look at two objects at the same time but can turn a single eye towards heaven while he finds a new and unthought of ease and alacrity in this arduous advancement towards Zion now that Adversity has torn from him the load he had so long struggled under - and the deed which appeared to him at first so cruel now manifests itself



as a deed of the purest friendship. Adversity saw that the Christian would lose heaven unless the incumbrances under which he labored were torn away and she does not hesitate to inflict this painful but necessary wound.

And so does she sometimes see the Christian insensibly led astray from the narrow path by a too fond attachment to some friend - making him an idol. The child leans too much upon the parent or the parent too much upon the child - the wife too much upon the husband or the husband too much upon the wife - and they both insensibly wander from the strait and narrow path. But adversity springs from and the one is taken and the other one is left. He that is left looks about him in an agony of surprise and murmurs at the cruelty that has thus deprived him of a kind and affectionate friend who was the staff on which he leaned and perhaps too a Christian like himself. But when the bereavement leads him to see that he is departed from God has been wandering in forbidden paths - when he finds himself seeking again and finding the true way to Zion then does he admire the resolute kindness that has broken the charm that was destroying him and restored him to the joys of close communion with God.

And cannot those are my hearers who have recently felt the strong hand of Adversity wrench from them as it were in a moment a husband or a father who had escaped all the arrows of death for fourscore and 10 years - cannot these testify thus soon that the blow has tended to lead them near to God? Cannot they testify that since that time their prayers have been more frequent and fervent and their thoughts and desires and affections more heavenly. Nay cannot they almost adopt the language of David, *it is good for me that we have been afflicted!* Then are they prepared also to regard adversities as a friend who is doing all in her power to help them to heaven.

Other friends the pilgrim of Zion meets in his way are fellow travelers. It cheers him and strengthens him to find others of like tastes and desires struggling with like difficulties burthens - pressing on toward the same place of rest and happiness. They can discuss together the dangers and trials of the way, take counsel together how they shall best resist and overcome their enemies and help one another when anyone sinks under his burthen. And some such friends the Christian always finds along the strait and narrow path although the Saviour declares them to be few and although some who commence the journey with him prove to be the followers of Judas or Hymenaeus or Demas.

Another important friend and director of the Christian traveller is the Bible. Whenever he is perplexed about the true path he has only to resort to his friend and the way will be pointed to him so clearly that the wayfaring man though a fool need not to err therein. When decoyed by his enemies out of his true course let him look to this friend and he will direct him how to regain it. In short whenever doubt and difficulty and distress encompass the pilgrim's soul that friend is always at hand to enlighten direct and console.

And there is one other friend that never forsakes the traveler till he has entered Zion. It is the Holy Spirit of God. Indeed it is he by his secret influences who effectually guards the pilgrim and without those influences he would infallibly be overcome and never reach heaven. For the prophet says *O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. But as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God.* When the Christian traveller is perplexed to find the true path you be hears a voice behind him saying *this is the way walk ye in it.* And that is the voice of the Spirit. When ambition assaults him the Spirit whispers in his ear *whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abused; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.* When Fame attacks in the Spirit whispers, *love not the praise of man more than the praise of God.* When Pride endeavors to decoy him the Spirit whispers *mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate.* When Pleasure allures by her siren

voice the Spirit whispers *None that go unto her return again neither take they hold of the path of life.* When Sloth urges to an easier course the Spirit whispers *Go to the ant thou sluggard consider her ways and be wise.* When Scepticism sneers upon him the Spirit whispers *there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts.* When false Philosophy is scattering her poisonous the Spirit whispers, *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ.* And when Satan oppresses the believers soul the Spirit whispers *Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* So when the Christian is borne down with doubts and despondency and discouraged because of the way the Spirit whispers *Fear not – When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; and when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.* And thus does that Spirit guide the believer all his journey through.

Lastly - the way to Zion leads across the valley of death and terminates in heaven.

That is indeed a dark and awful gulf to enter. Satan knowing that he can follow the pilgrim no farther here concentrates all his malice and pours it upon his head and arms death with a thousand imaginary terrors and harrows up the believers soul with sinful forebodings of the terrific conflict. But the moment he enters this gulf he finds a path marked out for him by the Saviour and the rod and staff of that Saviour to comfort him. In one moment all his fears all his enemies and what is much more all his sins are gone and he finds that his toilsome journey is ended and that he now treads the golden streets of Zion and begins to quaff in as the glorious reward of all his labors fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

If such be the result of the end of the Christian pilgrimage my brethren who of us does not feel a new resolution bracing him up to a more determined struggle with the enemies of the soul? Who is there that will not set his face as a flint toward Zion and seek more earnestly the way? A little longer struggle with our enemies - a few more rocky precipices to climb - a few more reproaches and pains and seasons of darkness to endure - a little more watching and praying and pressing forward and we shall triumph – nay we *shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

*Then let my soul march boldly on  
Press forward to the heavenly gate  
There peace and joy eternal reign  
And glittering robes for conquerors wait  
There shall I wear a starry crown  
And triumph in almighty grace  
While all the armies of skies  
Join in my glorious Leader's praise. [Source: Presbyterian hymn]*

Delivered

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At Deerfield North Parish July 1837

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## Sermon 130 God Warns Men Once

[Sermon No. 130, "God Warns Men Once," Proverbs 1:30-31, 1822 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 7]

Proverbs 1:30-31

*They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof:  
Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices.*

From the text many an important sermon might be written as it contains many leading ideas. I shall confine myself to one of them at this time. It is this - that God always gives impenitent men at least one special warning before he finally abandons them to ruin. This seems evidently implied in the text. Solomon here represents Wisdom as enquiring without and uttering her voice in the streets and among other solemn exhortations to the ungodly is that in the text. By wisdom we may understand the instructions of God's word personified or it may mean Christ as the wisdom of God. The latter construction seems most natural for us to adopt since Christ does warn all men by his word his providences and his Spirit in these latter days and it is a curious fact that the words in the original are future. Wisdom shall cry without etc. The earnest exhortations and solemn reproofs and awful threatenings which she utters appear to be directed to all impenitent men within the sound of her voice that is in all the earth where the bible has gone. Certainly there is no reason for limiting them to this or that class of sinners. And the ground on which she delivers to them that they shall be left to eat the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices is that they would none of her counsel and despised her reproof. An unavoidable inference therefore is that God gives men a special warning counsel and reproof before he gives them over to endless ruin. To the illustration of this doctrine I shall devote the principal part of this discourse.

And here might I appeal to reason to show that such a proposition is a probable one. For if God has not spared his only begotten Son but delivered him up for us all - if he really desires that all men shall come to repentance he might rationally conclude he would urge upon men the acceptance of his salvation in a manner the most powerfully calculated to avert their attention. But it is not my intention to dwell on such an argument as this. Nor shall I attempt an array of passages from scripture to prove the proposition. Although I might say that when God declares *to every one that drinketh come ye to the waters and he that no money: come ye here and eat; and insist whosoever will to come and take of the waters of life freely when he says - I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh - to convince the world of the sin and righteousness and judgment to win all this* seems to imply a special meaning and entreaty - nay the very words are a special warning to sinners. But as I use the phrase at this time I mean something more special than the general declarations of the scripture which impenitent men often read year after year with the utmost carelessness. I mean a naming which at the time makes an impression on the conscience of such whether it proceed from the word or providences or Spirit of God. Given the history of the effects of these three things I shall draw an illustration of the proposition that God always gives sinners at least one official warning before he abandons them to eternal ruin.

1. He warns some by his word.

We are told that the word of God is the *fire and the hammer to break in pieces the flinty rock*, and in

another place that it is *the sword and the Spirit - quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and body and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart*. And such do men often find it. Sometimes a passage of scripture which they have read over an hundred times without feeling its force at all penetrates their heart with the rapidity of lightning and compels them to cry out *the arrows of the Almighty are within me the poison whereof drinketh up my Spirit*. Sometimes the solemn question *how old art thou* arrests their attention - sometimes the enquiry *how long have I to live* - sometimes the declaration *There is no peace saith my God to the wicked* or the questions who among us *shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting beings?* Sometimes they read that *it is high time to awake out of sleep - again they know that the time is short* - and thousands of like passages have been made to enter like daggers into the sinner's bosom. Perhaps they first struck him when reading the bible and hearing the preached word. But under whatever circumstances he finds that they fasten upon his thoughts as if directed and continually distress him. They lead him to give up his doubts about the reality of religion and he feels alarmed for his situation and is perhaps is led to go into his closet to pray God to have mercy upon him or to resort to some Christian friend for advice. And whether he believes it afterwards or not that this was a special warning from God for him to prepare for eternity. We do not enquire here indeed whether the peculiar effect of such passages of scripture on the sinners mind be the work of God's Spirit. For it is enough to know that the words that produce the effect are the words of God and that there in the sinner's condition enough to excite all this distress. The man therefore who suffers the anxiety produced in his mind by a passage of scripture to wear away without resulting in his becoming religious neglects and disregards a special warning from God. And the probability is that he will never have another such a warning; but be left *to eat up the fruit of his own ways* - that is to feel the genuine effect of sin in this world and the pains of hell forever.

## 2. God often specially warns sinners by his providences.

*O Lord, says the prophet, I know that the way of men is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.* And we are told by the Saviour that *not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice and the very hairs of our head are all numbered*. The various peculiar and trying circumstances in which we are often brought seemingly by accident are not therefore the result of accident but of the wise Providence of God. Whatever warnings therefore we receive from these are to be regarded as coming from God. And these are various.

God warns one man by the conversation or example of pious friends. That is the sinner is sometimes awakened through their exertions in his behalf. Some word which they drop - some prayer they make reaches and informs their consciences. They are led to look into their hearts and they perceive that all is not right there may they find all to be wrong. They perceive that a deep and thorough revolution must be wrought within them ere they shall be fit to die. Often some word that was dropped from the pulpit perpetually seems to their minds and fills them with anguish. And it is a warning of God to them to prepare to meet Him in judgment. And if they fight it, it may be the last warning.

God sometimes warns men by disappointments and misfortunes. He teaches them in this way that there is nothing on earth in which we ought to set our supreme affections. And often when men have been long and ardently pursuing some object as if it were the supreme good and God dashes the the cup from their hand just as they are about to drink it and their idol is torn away it leads them to see the vanity of worldly objects and have something of a sense of the worth of religion and the favours of God. They are checked in their earnest pursuit and stand hopeless and helpless when they see the object of their fondest desires snatched away. And it is indeed a powerful lesson and a powerful warning. And if a man

suffer it to pass away without resulting in his conversion if you permits some other idol to come into his heart and is not lead to place his affections on God there is no reason to expect God will ever more break his sinful slumbers till the day when the final trumpet shall sound. He may leave the man to go on in uninterrupted worldly prosperity – a sign sometimes that he is given men over to reprobate minds and that he has said concerning them *why should they be stricken any more they will revolt more and more. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth*. Let every sinner therefore who has met with disappointment and troubles in times past but who is still in impenitent let him remember that God has given him a solemn and a loud warning and that he has rejected the counsel and the reproof of the all wise God and has no reason to expect but he will be given up to eat the fruit of his own way and be filled with his own devices.

God sometimes warns man by signal deliverances. Their lives perhaps are in imminent danger from the elements or the wicked man. And in the moment when they realize that they are on the brink of destruction how they long to have God for their friend. They pray earnestly to him for help and would give ten thousand worlds in that moment to believe they had an interest in the Saviour. God delivers them from their danger and alas many of them forget their cries and and resolutions in the crisis of danger and become as careless as ever. But let them remember that they have been solemnly warned of their miserable condition without a Saviour.

God often warns sinners by sickness. He weakens their strength and brings them upon the bed of sickness and brings death and judgment to them. They feel the slow approach of the king of terrors and perceive the world to be wholly incapable of affording them any support. They perceive and acknowledge that they are utterly without hope and without God. They long to be spared one more month one more week or even another day in order that they may become reconciled to God. All the extra excuses for neglecting religion with which they have stifled the voice of conscience in days past now vanish and they are astonished that they could have lived so long in neglect of it. They no longer doubt that they are utterly lost and entirely depraved - and that they must persist without the grace of God to change their hearts. O how earnestly do they cry to God for mercy! How certain they are that if he should spare them from the grave this once they shall assuredly lead different lives and seek religion with all their hearts. But death appears near and their anguish is inexpressible. God however has mercy on them and arrests their disorder and gives them another opportunity perhaps of years in which to repent and reform.

Yet how many there are who under fresh circumstances do not carry into effect one of their sick bed resolutions! But will such ever have another warning? Probability says no! For how can they have a louder one? And if they have disregarded this they would surely disregard another. And how can it be that God after such a daring contempt of his threatening and abuse of his goodness should visit them in mercy any more.

God warns sinners by death. The youth perhaps sees one of his companions with no more of religion than himself suddenly cut down in his sins. He is led to enquire why that companion was made an example to warn him instead of his having been called to warn his companion. He cannot help enquiring whether he is prepared for death and finding himself unprepared he is alarmed and distressed and indeed this was to him a most solemn warning to him to prepare to meet his God. But after the anxiety and distress produced by it pass away without resulting in the conversion of the youth and he becomes as stupid and as unconcerned as ever. Yet he will remember it again with an indescribable anguish in another world and the thought that he neglected a special warning of God will be a dagger in his bosom forever and ever.

Sometimes also the person in middle life who has neglected religion all his days is called to see one of his neighbors or friends - it may be a wife or a husband or brother or sister suddenly arrested by the stroke of death and hurried to the judgment. The solemn providence stops him in his career of sin and he looks around him with surprise that he has yet lived and is astonished that he could so long have neglected the salvation of his soul. His anxiety and distress are so great that he resolves never to rest any where again until he rest in Christ. He does not need anyone to tell him that this is a warning from God - he feels it deeply feels it for a time. But alas! In the majority of instances after he is attempted to pray a few times and resolved a few times his anxiety leaves him and he abandons religion that he may again hug the world. But should he be called to lie on a bed of sickness conscience will again remind him that he has had a warning from God and has neglected it. Should his reason be granted him when he dies memory and conscience will then do their office upon him and they will follow him into eternity.

A similar effect may be produced upon the man that is beginning to descend the downhill of life and feels age creeping up on him when the hand of death takes one from him peculiarly endeared to him or of the same age. He looks around him and enquires where are the multitude who began life with me and a voice answers him from the grave yard - *here we lie as a warning to you to follow us*. He is astonished that when the arrows of death fly so thick around him he has been spared. Father and mother sister and brother and many a child or neighbor perhaps have all gone before him and yet he is spared. And he is led to enquire also what would have been my condition had I died instead of these my friends. O I must not I dare not I will not any longer neglect to prepare to die. I am now warned most seriously for the last time and it must not pass unimproved. And probably such an one if he do not improve the admonition thus given him will be left to eat of the fruit of his own ways.

In the third place place God warns men by his Spirit.

In the cases that have been mentioned where the word and providence of God had a dark and a special effect on the heart that effect resulted probably from the Spirit of God applying that word and those providences. But there are also numerous cases in which neither of these are the means of awakening men but still they are awakened. It may have been that a word dropped in conversation or from the pulpit or even a thought has sunk into the soul of the sinner like an arrow arousing him to a sense of his danger or without any apparent means he finds himself enquiring what he must do to be saved. He may have been a scoffer at religion but he scoffs no more - reality now bursts upon him with overwhelming power and brings him upon his knees. He may have been a sceptick - but his doubts are now all gone and the threatenings of God appear awfully true. He may have been a moral man and fancied that his own righteousness would save him: but now he is slain by the law and perceives there is no hope without a change of heart and faith in Christ. Whatever may have been his previous views and feelings now he finds himself to be a sinner - exposed to the righteous indignation of God - a violator of his law and condemned to suffer its penalties. The awful terrors of eternity pass before him in all their indescribable vividness. He hurries into the business and pleasures of the world: but the thought of an unreconciled God - and of the soul unprepared for heaven follow him there and goad him with a perpetual sting. Wherever he is whatever he does he realizes forcibly the declaration of God that there is no peace to the wicked and that they are *like the troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt*. The passage of such of man appears to him like an unprofitable waste without a single flower or fruit or prospect on which he can fix his eyes with pleasure. He feels that he has been living all his days in the service of this neglect of God - neglect of the bible and of prayer and of the many opportunities set before him to obtain religion and now he fears that the door of mercy is shut against him and that God will soon appear to execute his vengeance upon him. He fears that the Spirit is already grieved away

from him and that he is given over to hardness of heart and blindness of mine and vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. And he realizes too in some measure that it is just in God thus to forsake him since he has so long forsaken God.

This it is my hearers to be under the special convicting influences of the Spirit of God. And if this be not a warning from God to prepare to meet him in judgment we know not what can be. And if a man neglects such a warning surely it must be just in God to leave him to eat the fruit of his own ways and be filled with his own devices. Yet multitudes do neglect this warning - yes I have reason to fear that many in this house have neglected it and are now more unconcerned than before they received it. They may even forget that they were thus warned: but except they repent they will remember it in hell.

With a few inferences I close this discourse.

1. It is be found the subject shows us the reasons why so many of us are so little affected by the words and the providences of God. Probably in former years we have been specially awakened and alarmed for our safety either by the word or providences or Spirit of God and we neglected that warning and now though similar afflictive providences may come upon us they produce little effect because the Spirit of God does not apply them. We have grieved him away and now we are left to eat of the fruit of our own way and be filled with our own devices. Formerly perhaps a passage of God alarmed us but we shook off our convictions and now the most awful threatenings of the bible do not move us at all. The death of some dear friend or some signal deliverance or some heavy disappointment or some sickness called us in some past season to be anxious for our souls yet we shake off any alarm and these same things have been repeated upon us perhaps but had no abiding effect. And why? Because the Spirit of God has been resisted and we are left to our own devices.

2. We learn from this subject what is the best evidence that the Spirit of God has forsaken a man. It is this. When the passage of scripture that once alarmed him exceedingly now alarms him no more - or when a solemn providence which once led him to enquire what he must do to be saved now when it is repeated upon him produces no such effect although he is yet unregenerate. A man for instance was once most solemnly impressed by the death of a friend: but since that time he has buried many others especially dear: no such effect was produced - nothing indeed but sorrow for the loss of a friend and no special concerns for his soul. Now if such a case does not show a man given over to eat the fruit of his own ways - if it does not show the Spirit of God to abandon him I know of nothing that can prove it. Stupidity my hearers stupidity when God speaks to uses as he does whenever he afflicts us is a most conclusive evidence that we have neglected his warning voices in times past and that we are now left to our own chosen way.

3. We learn from the subject what will stop the mouths of the wicked in hell. It will be the reflection that they have been solemnly and loudly warned by God while in this world. They will recollect the way passages of scripture the very sermons or exhortations or providences that awakened them. And knowing that they willfully neglected the warning they will not dare to open their mouths with one murmur against God - but the whole world of hell will become guilty before him. If there existed upon your farm a high and dangerous precipice and you saw your neighbor going towards it and you earnestly and affectionately told him of his danger and besought him to turn his course if that neighbor persisted in approaching the precipice and at last actually tumbled over it and mangled his body would he presume however great his anguish to reproach you as the cause of his misery? No more reason will the condemned Spirit in hell have to murmur against God as the author of their anguish. Their bitter and eternal wail will be *we have destroyed ourselves - how have we hated instructions and despaired*

*reproof!* Now are we filled with our own devices and are eating the fruit of our own ways.

4. We learn from the subject what will be the chief torment of hell. It is the recollection of the warnings of God which the wicked have neglected. Continually will the thought occur to them that they were once most solemnly told of their danger and exhorted by God to flee from it. They had heaven and hell set before them the one in all its joys and the other in all its horrors and they chose hell when nothing was hurting but the choice to conduct them to heaven.

5. We learn from the subject what it is that ought to be the greatest cause of alarm to the impenitent. It is the fact that they are unalarmed. If what we have said in this discourse be true this last furnishes the utmost reason to fear that they are abandoned to their own devices - and how dreadful the thought that we are given up of God. That do what we will we shall never feel any anxiety about our souls but shall only continue and harden in sin while we live and lie down at last in eternal sorrow.

I have said that with some inferences I should conclude this discourse. Best can I conclude until I have enquired of you my hearers whether you have not been at some former time specially warned of God and alarmed at your danger? Is there one person present who has become a moral apart tomorrow that has not at some time or other felt a special anxiety for his or her soul. If there is not then depend upon it my friend that God has solemnly and specially warned you of your danger and if you neglected that warning and have become again careless and unconcerned you have surely awful reasons to fear that God has abandoned you as you have abandoned him. After he has warned and men turn not he strikes. How soon or how sudden the blow may follow the warning in some cases we know not - but you have reason to fear it every moment. You have no reason to expect that another warning will be given you. You have every reason for fearing that you will be left to live on in your present stricken course of sin until the hour comes - and depend upon it the thought that you have been once awakened and neglected his admonition will sting you with anguish and grieve you with despair throughout eternity.

Delivered

At Conway November 1822

At Amherst College June 1831

At Amherst West Parish April 1835



## Sermon 133 Resignation

[Sermon No. 133, "Resignation," Acts 21:14, 1822 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 8]

Acts 21:14

*The will of the Lord be done.*

*True resignation, says a late excellent writer, is the hardest lesson in the school of Christ. It is the oftenest taught and the latest learnt. It is not a task which, when once got over in some particular instance, leaves us master of the subject. The necessity of following up the lesson we have begun presents itself almost every day in some new shape occurs under some fresh modification. The submission of yesterday does not exonerate us from the resignation of today. Thus Hannah More*

The correctness of these remarks will be questioned by no one: and they show the importance of frequently exhibiting and enforcing true Christian resignation - since though no virtue be more difficult yet none is calculated to produce more genuine happiness to the believer. It brings him just into that situation which is proper for a lost sinner who is saved only by grace. It empties him of self-confidence and pride and binds him to closer communion with God the source of all peace and satisfaction. I propose at this time to explain the nature and force the duty of resignation to the will of God. The text scarcely needs any explanation. It contains an instance of resignation of the genuine stamp. Paul was in the house of the evangelist Phillip in Cesarea on his way to Jerusalem. But a certain prophet in that place predicted the woes that awaited him should he go to that city. And his disciples with one consent *besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered what mean ye to weep it to break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, says the historian, we ceased saying the will of the Lord be done.* As soon as these humble Christians were satisfied that Paul acted in conformity with God's will in giving to Jerusalem faith triumphed over the feelings of affection. Thus to say and thus to feel in every situation of life prosperous and adverse is the duty of the Christian. But in order to avoid taking up with false resignation, I shall first endeavor to explain the nature of that which is genuine.

And first Christian resignation implies something more than philosophical fortitude.

Philosophy teaches her votaries to bear with composure the evils of life because they cannot be avoided. And there were in the Grecian and Roman states numerous instances of this kind of fortitude. The Stoics taught that a wise man ought not to be affected either by joy or grief and that all the ills of life such as pain poverty and the like are fancied not real evils. The Cynicks bore trials with a vain and haughty contempt being too proud to murmur and repine. Indeed a sullen and obstinate pride is consistent with and probably constitutes the essence of all that usually goes by the name of philosophical fortitude. And though it may sometimes counterfeit the appearance of Christian resignation, yet it may always be distinguished by the absence of a deep and pervading desire that the ills we suffer are according to the will of God and will promote his glory. Philosophy submits because she is forced to it. Christianity submits because it is God that inflicts them.

There is a resignation akin to this which I here call philosophical which we not unfrequently see

manifested. A man is called to see a friend torn from him by death. And until the moment when the recovery of that friend is regarded as hopeless he thinks nothing of submission - but when he sees it the grasp of death cannot be unclosed then he is all resignation. And why. Because he is compelled to it. Or such a man may be called himself to a conflict with the last enemy. And so long as he has any hope of life he manifests nothing like resignation but when all hope of recovery is gone or pain presses him so keenly that his soul chooses death rather than life he answers his anxiously enquiring friends by saying that he is resigned to death: whereas he ought to say that he is forced to submit which in a scriptural sense is no resignation at all.

2. Genuine resignation does not imply a willingness to suffer the pains of hell forever.

Something like the affirmative of this assertion has been advanced by writers on theology. But true resignation is our unreserved submission to the will of God. And that will must be learned from his revealed word: but that's declares God does not will that any should perish and although some will perish finally yet no man can know that it is God's will that he should perish. Nay if he knows himself to be a Christian or if he believes himself to be one then if he is willing to suffer perdition he is willing to endure what he believes to be contrary to the will of God. He is willing to be made an eternal enemy of God and of all good. Which is indeed a strange sort of submission. Moreover there is no precept or scripture enjoying such a resignation. Two passages however are produced which are said to be examples of it - the one in which Moses entreates God to blot him out of his book if he will not forgive the sins of the Israelites and the others in which Paul wishes himself accursed from Christ for his brethren his kinsman according to the flesh. But the latter passage probably means no more than that the apostle could wish to die for his brethren if by that means they could be saved. And the former passage has no relation to the subject: for Moses prayed to be blotted out of God's book (that is doubtless to suffer temporal death) provided God would not spare his countrymen; just as on another occasion he prayed that God would kill him or release him from his heavy burdens that lay upon him. And indeed let men reason as they may on this front - nay let sincere men actually believe themselves willing to suffer eternal perdition to glorify God - yet the truth is no Christian ever can be brought no Christian ought to be brought to be willing to become an enemy of God and a companion of devils.

3. Christian resignation does not imply an insensibility to the evils we suffer.

The language of Paul at the time the text was uttered shows how keenly the disciples felt the pang of separation from him and of yielding him up to his enemies. *What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?* At the tomb of Lazarus Jesus wept. And when he came into the garden of Gethsemane although he there exhibited the most perfect example of resignation the world has ever witnessed yet his agony was so great that he sweat as it were great drops of blood. To be insensible to the evils God brings upon us in Stoicism - is atheistical apathy. To be keenly sensible of them and yet be able to say *thy will be done* is Christianity. When the ties of the tenderest earthly affections are rent asunder by the violent and unsparing arm of death why should we wish to hide the falling tear or suppress the heaving sigh? Why desire to mail ourselves in an unfeeling philosophy? Religion teaches us to cultivate and improve instead of blunting and deadening the sensibilities of our nature and it is in the icy halls of philosophy and not in vernal warmth of pure and undefiled Christianity that we may expect to find the affections frozen and the heart callous. The tear which we drop on the grave of friendship or over our disappointed hopes is often the signal nature gives that she acquiesces in the will of God.

It gives the mourner's heaving bosom vent and quenches the anguish that would else consume. And flowing through the channel nature give softens a heart that else would stiffen into stone. So softened

there a heavenly seed is sown which shoots a plant that bears an hundredfold.

4. Christian resignation is not inconsistent with earnest supplications to God for deliverance from the evils we suffer.

Some of the ills of life come upon us suddenly before we have had opportunity to implore God to spare us - and others are altogether without remedy - such as the death of friends - none of whom can ever return to us however earnestly we pray for their resurrection. But many of the trials we suffer are such as God in his providence without violating the fixed laws of his government can remove. Now each of these evils is intended to produce a given effect - and none but God knows how long it is necessary we should suffer them. So that while we have a feeling that acquiesces in their continuance if such be God's will we may likewise earnestly entreat him that he would remove the burden: for perhaps the utterance of that very prayer with a proper Spirit is the precise state of feeling which God will bring us by the affliction and when that is produced he may consistently relieve us.

But we have an example on this point more conclusive than our reasonings. Thrice did the Saviour in Gethsemane pray earnestly that if it were possible the cup might pass from him. And if he could offer such a prayer under such circumstances and at the conclusion say *nevertheless not my will but thine be done* there is no evil however severe and apparently necessary from which we may not pray for deliverance provided true resignation possesses our hearts.

5. Christian resignation implies that we are sensible that the evil we suffer are deserved.

Some of the most devoted servants of God have been called to pass through the deepest waves of affliction and trial ever experienced by man. But never was there such an one who did not deserve it all and much more as punishment of his sins. For we all profess to believe my brother that our sins deserve eternal punishment in hell. And what mortal suffering can be compared for a moment with this? The fact is seen as the abominable thing which God hates and so long as he hates it it deserves his indignation. But the Christian is delivered from the condemnation of eternal death and any sufferings he feels here on earth therefore to be regarded as infinitely less than his iniquities deserve. Yet it is not an unfrequent thing for men when under the pressure of certain kinds of trouble to feel as if they did not deserve it. Thus we may be ungratefully treated by our nearest friends for whom we have labored much and suffered much. And we are apt under such trials to feel as if we did not deserve such treatment. And perhaps we do not from man but we certainly do from God and whatever we suffer we ought always to recollect that it comes upon us by the appointment of God. *Affliction cometh not forth of the dust neither doth trouble spring out of the ground. Why then should a living man complain – a man for the punishment of his sins?*

Still however it is not infrequent for men to feel as if their lot in the world was a hard one and when they see others whose lives have been worse than their own surrounded by prosperity and gliding easily along its unruffled stream they are often disposed to murmur at their trials and to enquire what they have done to render them deserving of so much more severe a fate than their wicked neighbors? We might reply that they have sinned and that whatever be the condition of others around them their lot is much more happy than they deserve. Until they have such a feeling as this they will never know anything of true Christian resignation to the allotments of Providence.

6. Christian resignation implies a firm belief of the wisdom and equity of God's overriding providence.

There is a strong disposition in man to keep the agency of God in the events of life out of sight. In all heathen lands and in some Christian lands adverse events have been ascribed to the power of evil Spirits. And even at this day we often hear so much said about events happening by chance or by accident that there is reason to fear many believe the providence of God does not extend to every event but that he has left the universe to the direction of certain fixed laws and has retired himself into a kind of Epicurean repose. Not that any man will acknowledge speculatively that he believes in any thing like this: for the declarations of scripture that *not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice and the very hairs of our head are all numbered* stand directly opposed to such a supposition. But there is much practical disbelief of the providence of God. The truth is all the adverse events and crosses and trials we must endure are as really the work of God (as anything can be) as the act of eating and drinking is the work of man: because he has so constituted things that these evils must unavoidably come upon us. And unless we realize the hand of God in our afflictions we may submit to the evils we suffer - because we cannot avoid them but we shall not submit to the will of God which only is Christian resignation.

#### 7. Christian resignation implies correct views of the character and requirements of God.

Suppose a rebel against the national government were called upon to resign himself up to the will of the government and be made to believe that the government was altogether merciful would never punish him nor require any atonement for his offences no doubt he might be made cheerfully to commit himself into their hands. But let him be told that a trial awaited him and that without certain conditions performed his life would be forfeit to his crimes and that not one jot or tittle of the law would ever be abated until his compliance and instead of submission there would be stirred up within him a more determined opposition than ever. So a man may persuade himself by his reasonings that God is altogether merciful and forget that he has an attribute of justice to support and into the hands of such a God he is willing to commit himself - and relying on that unmix'd mercy he may even be composed in a dying hour. But let him be made to see that the same God who styled himself long suffering and gracious declared also in the same sentence that he will by no means clear the guilty - let him be told that unless you repent and reform God will be to him a consuming fire and every principle of resistance will rise to a higher pitch within him and he will be the furthest possible from Christian resignation. It is one thing to submit to a God of our own imagination and quite a different thing to submit to the God of the bible.

In the eighth and last place Christian resignation implies an unreserved surrender of ourselves to the will of God.

This comprehends indeed the sum and substance of resignation. The man who is possessed of this feeling finds every murmur and every cavil to have vanished from his mind. His distrust and doubt are banished and in their place he finds a filial confidence possessing his bosom leading him to repose his soul and all its interests in God. He feels assured that God is just and true in all his judgments: and though borne down under the rod of God's chastisement he still looks up to heaven and exclaims with *Job shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil? Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.* It is the confidence of one who feels that he is weak and God is almighty - that he is ignorant and God all wise - that he is sinful and God all merciful, It is the confidence of a child who feels that his father's corrections are deserving and who is led thereby to weep and mourn over his ingratitude. It is the confidence of the returning penitent who had long wandered from his father's house and on his return is met by his forgiveness and tenderness while yet a great way off. And that confidence that sense of God's goodness leads a man of Christian resignation to have an earnest desire that he may glorify God in his body and in his Spirit - and he feels willing and rejoices to be in the hands of such a Being to be disposed of for his glory - and to be made an instrument of the promotion of

Christ's kingdom on earth. He longs that God would bind his soul to his throne and that he would not suffer him again to depart from his presence nor permit his will any more to rebel against the will of God. He feels that then only is he safe – then only is he happy when he his will is swallowed up in the will of God.

This it is to be truly resigned to the will of God. And blessed is the man whose heart divine grace has subdued into this sweet and child like submission. Yet alas how many of us in the language of the apostles are *self-willed* - preferring our own interest to the glory of God and refusing the entire surrender of every faculty of body and soul to his service. But in so doing how unreasonable how treacherous to our truest happiness and best interests are we! For in the first place the government of God over the world is altogether just and right.

It is impossible a being of such attributes as ascribed to God should rule in any other mode. There is if I may so speak a necessity of his nature to hold the reins of dominion in such a manner that his own glory and the best good of the universe shall be promoted. When therefore we murmur at that government in other words when we are wanting in Christian resignation we oppose his glory and our own best good.

We set up our wills in opposition to the will of God - and however startling the idea may be we do in fact profess to be wiser than God. O that we could all unite in the way of Moses and the Lamb! *Great and marvelous are thy works Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy ways thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee O Lord and glorify thy name for about only art holy.*

Again - every adverse event God brings upon us is intended for our best good.

*What son is there whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of Spirits and live. For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.* And is this the benevolent intention of God in bringing upon us trials and sorrows. And shall we by our own murmuring spirit by our want of genuine resignation defeat that intention and cause them to prove a savour of death unto death?

Again my hearers look at the example of Christ.

Never was there a cup of misery so bitter as that which he drank up in Gethsemane! *It was the cup of the wine of the fierceness of God's wrath.* There was mixed in it the curse of a broken law - the penalty due to a sinful world – yet the Saviour in full view of the dreadful agony before him cried *not my will but thine be done*, and drank it to the last drop. Let none of his disciples shrink from submitting with cheerfulness to the comparatively trifling evils they are called to endure. Let them look at Gethsemane and the cross and their subdued feelings will all be conquered.

Once more my brethren permit me to urge the duty of resignation by the consideration that until we practice it we can never be truly happy.

What is it that constitutes the peace and joy and consolation of the Christian? It is resignation to the will of God. What is it that makes up the blessedness of heaven? It is to have the will of angels and glorified Spirits swallowed up in the will of the Creator. While unsubmissive we are endeavoring to build up an interest that is separate and inconsistent with the peace of universal benevolence God is carrying into

execution. And on such selfishness there rests a curse. It is not till we join heart and hand in the benevolent designs of Jehovah that we can feel anything of the happiness which God feels and we shall never cordially unite in those designs until a Spirit of pure and holy resignation take possession of our souls. The more that Spirit governs us the nearer do we resemble God - and just in proportion as his blessed image becomes brighter within us will be the increase of our happiness.

Two remarks will close.

1. To be truly resigned to the will of God is a certain evidence that we are the children of God. In other words have been born again of water and the Spirit.

Never does proud and apostate man heartily bow his will to the will of God till the Spirit has subdued it and he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. To feel that he deserves the severest afflictions of life as the punishment of his sins - to have a realizing belief and sense of the overriding providence of God and correct views of the character and requirements of God and to surrender himself unreservedly into the hands of God - these are exercises the unrenewed heart is a stranger to: for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit. Whoever finds them existing within him is a believer.

But secondly there is no evidence of piety so difficult of application so liable to be counterfeited as resignation. This I have already shown by exhibiting in this discourse several things which are often mistaken for genuine submission to God. It is no difficult matter for almost any person to persuade himself that he is resigned to God's will: but it is a difficult and a rare thing to be really so. Let us then be cautious my hearers how we lay too much stress on a mark of regeneration so equivocal and deceptive. Indeed let us so live that we shall never be compelled to rely on any single evidence of our piety: but be always able to summon from our hearts from our closets and from our lives a host of witnesses who shall unite in testifying that we are adopted into the family of God.

Finally how miserable is that man who never felt genuine resignation of the will of God! I care not what iron strength of nerves what stoical indifference what philosophical calmness he may possess. If he has never known the sweet peace of surrendering his soul and body his temporal and eternal interests into the hands of God then he knows nothing of true happiness. He carries within his bosom an unkindled heart in which happiness can never dwell. Is there not some soul before me that from day to day is uneasy and discontented - that secretly murmurs when trials come and feels a restless desire after some more substantial happiness than the earth can yield? O come thou agitated soul and learn from this subject the secret of your wretchedness. It lies in your want of submission to the will of God. Make at once the surrender the entire surrender of all your powers and interest into the hands of God and the secret of peace and happiness will be put into your hands and your disenthralled spirit will henceforth exult in its liberty. The world that now looks so barren and cheerless will become a flowery and a fragrant field and when the waves of trouble sickness and death come rolling over you you will have in your hands the magic wand that can divide the waters so that dryshod you can go through.

*Resign - and all the load of life  
That moment you remove.  
Its heavy tax - ten thousand cares  
Devolve on one above...*

*[Source: Resignation, Edward Young]*

*Why should this anxious load*

*Press down your weary mind?  
O seek your heavenly father's throne  
And peace and comfort find.  
His goodness stands approved  
Unchanged from day to day  
I'll drop my burden at his feet  
And bear a song away.*

*[Source: Poem, Philip Doddridge]*

Delivered

At Conway November 1822  
At Amherst West Parish July 1832  
At Sunderland August 1836  
At Northampton March 1837  
At Amherst East Parish March 1837  
At Amherst North Parish November 1837  
At Amherst South Parish December 1840

## Sermon 135 Preparation for the Lord's Supper

[Sermon No. 135, "Preparation for the Lord's Supper," Revelation 19:7, 1822 Nov, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 8]

Revelation 19:7

*The marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready.*

The relation between Christ and the church is often in the scriptures represented under the figure of marriage. So it is described throughout Solomon's Song and the parable of the ten virgins is founded on the same idea. Say Paul to the Ephesians, *I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. For I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* And to the Ephesians he says, *No man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body of his flesh and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

By the marriage of the Lamb is usually understood the future union of Christ and the church in heaven. It may refer also to a state of greater prosperity and purity to which the church will be raised in the millennial days or at any other period when the church general or a particular church is revived and brought nearer to God. In which of these senses the text is to be understood may be doubtful probably however in the former. And now I have a question to propose - in what respect a preparation to meet Christ at his marriage supper in heaven differs from a preparation to meet him at his supper on earth? The preparation my brethren is essentially the same only perhaps different in degree. The very same qualities of heart the very same exercises are requisite to our coming to Christ's communion table on earth as are necessary to coming to his communion table in heaven except on earth sin will be mingled with all the believer does: not in heaven he will be freed from it. This fact indeed will render necessary for celebrating the Lord's supper on earth some peculiar duties and exercises which will be unnecessary in heaven such as prayer and repentance. But the man who is in a proper state of heart to approach the Lord's table in his earthly courts is prepared for his marriage supper in the New Jerusalem. Permit me then to attempt a short description of that state of heart and life it is requisite we should possess in order this day to celebrate acceptably the dying love of our Redeemer.

In the verse following the text it is said, *And to her (the church) was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.* This then is the preparation requisite to meeting the Lord. It implies surely that they must possess holiness of heart without which we are told in another place *no man shall see the Lord.* It implies also that they must be interested in the merits of Christ in order that their righteousness may be accepted. Without this index their righteousness is but as filthy rags and not the clean and white linen described in the context. For however advanced a man may be in holiness he is still a sinner and sin is mixed with all he does so that he must have the robe of Christ's righteousness cast around him in order to be pronounced clean. Indeed some good commentators as Scott suppose the righteousness mentioned in the text to refer entirely to Christ's righteousness received by faith. But I rather incline to regard it as it as their own personal righteousness: because the word in the original is plural - and the whole tenor of Scripture teaches us that it is only through Christ's merits that the holiness of the holiest man on earth is



accepted. Or rather the text seem to refer both to the personal righteousness of the saints and to the righteousness of Christ counted unto them for justification through faith.

The two general ideas in the text then which describe the preparation of the Christian for meeting his Lord in his earthly or heavenly flesh are 1. That he must possess holiness and righteousness in himself, and 2. That he must have received the righteousness of Christ. I now proceed to describe more particularly the effects of these principles when combined upon the believer.

1. The man who has the righteousness of the saints will have a deep sense of his lost condition by nature and this is essential to a right approach to the Lord's table.

By a state of nature I mean that condition we are all in before we are brought into a state of grace - I mean the condition to which we are introduced by our birth. We are told by Paul that this state of nature is a state of wrath in which we are all concluded to be under sin. The truth is we begin to sin as soon as we are capable of it and the moment we have sinned once we incur the curse that is threatened in the law of God. Which is everlasting punishment. And from this curse the united power of many angels and devils by ever so many prayers sufferings and efforts cannot relieve an individual. The Son of God must take human nature upon him and magnify the law and make it honourable by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree or that curse must have its inextinguishable accomplishment upon the criminal.

But farther still: The Christian in a proper frame for approaching the Lord's supper will feel no disposition to palliate the matter of his sinfulness by endeavouring to show if we come into the world with depraved natures the blame lies with God and not upon him. It is sufficient for him that he feels a wicked heart of unbelief and depravity within him and a conscience reproving him for indulging it. And every returning year shows him more and more of the depravity that lurks within him. And the character of that depravity assumes a more hateful form the longer he experiences the long suffering and mystery of his God and contemplate upon what God has done for man. The ingratitude of sinning against such as God appears more and more base. And the magnitude of the evil of sin rises higher and higher in his estimation. So that he is never much alarmed lest men should use too strong expressions concerning the depth and vileness of human depravity or the demerit of sin. It will be difficult to represent it in a worse light than it has appeared to him. And every time he returns to the communion table he brings with him a seemingly heavier load of sin and feels more uneasy under it and is led to cry more earnestly for deliverance.

Unless the Christian has a deep sense of his lost condition by nature he cannot be sensible of his obligations to Christ in shedding his blood and ransoming him from the effects of sin. Just as low as his views of himself are so high will his gratitude to his Redeemer arise. If he fancy himself not to be utterly lost by nature but has within him some native seeds of holiness he can feel but little comparative gratitude to Christ. When indeed he is comparatively but little indebted to him. The man who is cured of the plague will certainly feel more thankful to the physician than he who is cured only from the tooth ache.

Again this deep sense of his lost condition by nature will cause the Christian when he comes to the Lord's supper to have a deep and penetrating sense of his entire dependance on the grace of Christ for the continuance of holiness in his heart. For every holy desire he has had - for every fervent prayer he has prayed for every holy action he has performed he will give God the glory - and he will solemnly feel that if he ever has another right feeling or does another right action he shall be dependant on the same

grace. If he be left to himself he well knows from his sad experience that he shall return like the dog to his vomit. But if he have an impression that he is not so bad by nature and does not carry within him so utterly corrupt a heart he will not feel thus entirely indebted to the grace of God: but will impute some of his goodness to his own exertions and he will not suppose that he shall immediately lose all his holy desires and feelings though he be left to himself.

In the second place the man who is clothed with the righteousness of the Saints will have an exalted view of the character and especially of the holiness of God and this is essential to his readiness for the communion table.

The Christian is often lead to contemplate the natural attributes of God in the works of creation and is brought to exclaim with the Hosts of heaven *great and marvelous are they works, Lord God Almighty. In wisdom hast thou made them all.* And still oftener will he meet in the word of God with the most exalted description not only of his natural but moral attributes - and like Zophar he will be constrained to say *canst thou by searching find out God or the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?* And when he looks back on the history of the Israelites and sees the many striking evidences there how *jealous God is in holiness*, how he walked about mount Sinai lest sinful man should approach him how he smote 50,000 in Bethshemesh and for presuming to look into the holy ark. Those with leprosy seized Uzziah for intruding into the jurists office - when he reads the appalling history of the angels who swept away the first estate and especially when he looks beyond the symbols displayed before him at the Lord's Supper and sees the Son of God abandoned to the frenzy of his enemies and feeling the shafts of divine vengeance in his soul in Gethsemane and on the cross - and all to render it consistent for the holiness of God to extend to man the offers of pardon and peace, then especially will the Christian have a deep and overwhelming sense of the holiness of God so as almost to be constrained to cry out with the men of Bethshemesh *who can stand before this holy Lord God?* And when he brings this unapproachable purity of Jehovah in comparison with the pollution of his own heart O it will sink the Christian low in the dust and he will exclaim with Job, *Behold I am vile - what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hands upon my mouth.*

3. The man clothed with the righteousness of the saints will have exalted views of the character and works of Christ and this is essential to a readiness to partake of his supper.

There is such a thing as a man's having so deep a sense of his sinfulness as to feel that no ordinary effort - nay as if no created being could atone for his sins. But it must be him who thought it not robbery to be equal with God - or the sacrifice would not in the view of such a person be adequate for his redemption. It is indeed the vicarious sacrifice of Christ that forms the foundation of the believers hope and when he looks at the holiness and justice of God which spared not the angels that kept not their first estate when he looked at the wide deep rooted and universal result of mankind from their Maker when he looks into his own own polluted heart and sees what a stubborn mass of resistance to God is there lodged - when he looks at all the preparation of ages by prefiguring sacrifices and oblations - priests and prophets among the Jews all pointing to the expiatory offering of the Saviour - when he looks to the birth and life of that Saviour and sees him in Gethsemane and on the cross he cannot be tempted to form low ideas of the works of redemption. He cannot but believe that Christ was really a substitute for man *being worded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities.* Nor will he be left for a moment to suppose that all this preparatory work - this splendid prelude and his intense and unheard of sufferings was merely for the purpose of proving the missions of the Saviour to have been from God. He cannot believe that he who in the beginning was with God and was God who is over all God blessed forever and who thought it not robbery to be equal with God should have been made in the form of a servant and become obedient

unto death even the death of the cross merely to tell man that there is another world and to give him a more correct system of morality. And his own experience testifies with overwhelming power that there must have been an atonement made for our sins or we should never be saved. For when brought to see himself a sinner or no thought could sooth his distress but the declarations of scripture that Christ had died for his sins and made a propitiation for them. Nothing else could slay the enmity of his heart but the cross of Christ. To give up this doctrine therefore he must give up all his hopes since here they are founded. And when he comes to the table emblematical of this atonement he cannot help having his views of the works and character of that Saviour exalted. Were he disposed to doubt on the subject let him ascend to the gate of heaven in there listing he will hear a voice from the throne of the Eternal - *let all the angels of God worship him.* Again let him listen and he will hear ten thousand times ten thousands and thousands of thousands of voices joining in the new song. *Thou art worthy to take the books and open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by the blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. Worthy the is the Lamb that was slain and received power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. He will hear every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea and all that are in them saying blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever.* These songs of worship to the Lamb must the Christian hear on earth or he can never repeat them in heaven.

A forth thing essential a readiness for meeting the Lord Jesus Christ at his table is a spirit of humility penitence and prayer.

The proper place for sinners is in the dust. We are all sinners and therefore it becomes us when about to come to this solemn ordinance to take the place of the humble and contrite publican crying God be merciful to me a sinner. A sense of our sins before we professed religion and especially a sense of our transgressions since that period may well cause us to feel less than the least of all the saints and to draw forth from our eyes the tears of penitence. Prayer too is essential for without prayer we can have no communion with our Saviour and if we have no communion we are strangers to him and if strangers we deserve no place among his friends at his table. The man who spends most time on his business in the valley of humiliation and penitence and who therefore feels most unworthy is really the most worthy of communicants.

A fifth thing essential to a readiness to come to the Lord's supper consists in strong resolutions of amendment.

Amendment in prayers - amendment in self-examination and reading the scriptures in efforts to promote the cause of Christ in our various relative duties and in regard to our selfishness. No man who is a Christian can look a moment at his past life without feeling his need of such reformatations and no man can celebrate the Lord's supper as he ought without performing them with a firm determination not to suffer them to be broken. To confess our faults at the communion and yet make no reformatations the only adding sin to sin. We must come from that table resolving to take up the cross and actually take it up already or we have eaten and drunk unworthily.

In the sixth place the Spirit of brotherly love and active benevolence towards mankind constitute another part of the readiness for meeting Christ at his communion table.

My brethren what think ye will be the feelings of the communicants towards one another at the Lord's table in heaven? Nothing but unmingled love will reign in their bosoms. They will literally love their

neighbor as themselves. What then ought to be the feelings of those who surround the table of Christ on earth preparatory to his final marriage supper. A new commandment says John I give unto you that ye love one another. Yes my brethren and if we ever mean to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven we must love one another here. *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice and be ye kind to one another tender hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. If thou bring thy gift, etc.*

And what is the employment of the inhabitants of heaven? *Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?* And shall not Christians who expect soon to go and join these holy beings in acts of beneficence begin the work on earth. Shall they continue to live in selfishness all their days and at death become all at once filled with universal benevolence? No my brethren in and we must begin to do good here if we mean to be employed in the blessed work in heaven. We must regard our time our talents and our property as not our own but as due to our fellow men. How ashamed ought we to be if we presume without having given our time talents or money in the cause of benevolence to come and take our seat at the table of that Saviour who laid down his life for us!

A seventh important requisite for a readiness to approach the Lord's table is a tender and earnest desire for the salvation of the impenitent.

More than seven eighths of mankind even in those places where the Gospel is preached never approach and we have reason to suppose none of them ever wish to approach the Lord's table. And how sad and affecting spectacle to see more than half of the congregation go away indifferent to the kindest of all invitations to come and take up the waters of life without money and without price. How distressing to see the precious blood of the best of Saviours go neglected even perhaps by those who are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. And how awful to be found to the conclusion by their lives that the greatest part of them will never sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven! The communicant who partakes worthily cannot avoid this overwhelming view as he sees so many depart from the sacred feast and he must feel a spirit of earnest prayer that God would have mercy upon their souls.

The eighth essential of a readiness to partake of the Lord's supper is an earnest desire to live more to the glory of God.

This is the employment of saints and angels in heaven and constitutes their chief happiness. The promotion of that glory is the chief end for which we were created and just so far as that is promoted will happiness be increased and just so far as it is neglected will misery prevail. But the Christian will have cause to weep over the broken elements of Christ's body when he recollects how selfish he has been and how little he has done for God. His desires cannot therefore be prevented from going up to heaven that in future he may be enabled whether he eat or drink or whatever he does to do all to the glory of God.

The last essential of a readiness to partake of the Lord's supper is an earnest hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

The table of Christ is the place for being filled with the manna of heaven the bread of life and the water of life. There too if the Christian if he be in a proper frame of mind will feel most his leanness and poverty and have his appetite for holiness the most voracious. He feels as if he must be more like God - as if he could not be denied a greater share of holiness. And if such feelings really possess the soul

around the communion board they will rise in fervent ejaculations to heaven. And we have the assurance of the Saviour that such prayers always find audience and will bring down and answer. *Blessed are they that come and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.*

Such are the essentials of a preparation of heart to receive in a proper way the emblems of the Saviour's love at his table. And you have probably my brethren decided as I went along whether you possessed them. It is not difficult to determine if we will be faithful whether we have a deep sense of our lost condition by nature. Whether we have an exalted view of the character of God and of the character and work of the Saviour and a spirit of deep humility penitence and prayer and whatever we feel within no strong resolution of amendment and a feeling of brotherly love and a spirit of active benevolence and tender earnest desire for the salvation of the impenitent and an earnest desire to live more to the glory of God and eager hungerings and thirstings after righteousness. If in any of these things we feel ourselves deficient permit me to press upon your consciences and my own two motives to an immediate preparation for the Lord's supper lest we this day eat and drink damnation to ourselves.

1. If we are not prepared for the supper of Christ on earth we shall never be prepared for his marriage supper in heaven. The mere mention of this motive is enough to excite solemn apprehension within us lest we shall finally be of that disappointed number who shall cry Lord Lord open up unto us and he shall answer I remember you depart from me ye workers of iniquity. And it ought to stir us up to immediate repentance.

2. Consider brethren the acute ingratitude of neglecting a preparation for meeting our Saviour at his table.

Let me illustrate this by a parable. A certain powerful prince was at the head of an extensive empire which he governed by the wisest and most equitable laws so that his subjects rejoiced in his government and loved and revered his character. At length however an individual a poor ignorant man in a remote part of the empire revolted from him took up arms and obstinately persisted in his rebellion and slew several ambassadors sent to him. The subjects of this Prince expected ere long to see the rebel made an example to justice: but to their surprise the Prince sent his only son to carry to him proposals of reconciliation. This son after being long abused and wounded by the traitor at length succeeded by his patience and kindness in subduing his heart and winning his love and he returned joyfully to the allegiance of the prince and his sons promised to plead for his life. They also bestowed upon the poor man a fortune so large as to satisfy his most craving desires and he had the honor of being called an adopted son of the Prince. Every year afterward the Son of the Prince used to make the poor man a visit always at such times loading him with some new favour. For a time the poor man was delighted with such visits and wanted to make every preparation for seeing him in his powers. But after a few years although the son continued visits the poor man treated him with the greatest neglect appearing before him in the most slovenly dress manifesting no gratitude for his renewed favours. And what base ingratitude my hearers did he manifest?

And how much baser ingratitude my brethren do we manifest when we treat the visits of the Son of God in this same way! Every one of us were like rebels against the merciful government of God and it was only through the mission sufferings death and intercessions of this favour that we can be restored to the power and love of God. And if we are Christians he has reconciled us and made us heirs to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. And he briefly continues his visits of mercy to us at short intervals inviting us to his table and loading us with heavenly gifts. And now after all this for us to make no preparation to meet him - how black is the ingratitude how vile the disposition!

*The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. O tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon.*

Delivered

At Conway November 1822

At Conway May 1 1825

## Sermon 136 Family Government

[Sermon No. 136, "Family Government," Psalm 133, 1822 Oct,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 8]

### Psalms 133

*Behold now good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!  
It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even  
Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garment; As the dew of Hermon,  
and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion:  
for there the Lord commanded the blessing even life forevermore.*

It would indeed be an interesting spectacle could we see the whole human family who are the children of the same first parents partakers of a common nature and traveling together on the same road to eternity. It would be a transcendently beautiful spectacle could angels look down from heaven and behold all these dwelling together in unity - laying aside the weapons of war and forgetting the reproach of the tongue and feeling towards one another the affection and tenderness of those ought to feel who are linked together by the peculiar relationship of father and mother - brother and sister. The Psalmist doubtless had a special reference to the union that then so happily subsisted between the tribes of Israel - but the expressions are general and alike true of the unity between mankind at large - or between the members of the particular states or societies - or towns or neighborhoods or families. I am at liberty therefore to apply it to any of these and shall at this time consider how good and how pleasant it is for the members of a family to dwell together in unity. In other words my object at this time is to give a general description of a well regulated family. And I shall consider

1. Their conduct and feelings toward one another
2. Their contact and feelings toward others
3. Their conduct and feelings toward God.

1. Their conduct and feelings toward one another.

The parents of such a family being the head of it and sustaining the most responsible station first claim attention. And here let it be remarked that them the harmony and good regulation of a family will greatly depend upon the manner in which the parents conduct towards one another. God himself has condescended to give the most explicit rules to regulate their conduct. *Let every one of you in particular says the apostle so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence and likewise also the wife unto the husband. Husbands love your wives and be not bitter against them.* All bitterness between those so nearly related all unkind words or looks or feelings are the death of all good order and harmony and peace in the family. Let children or domestics be accustomed to hear the heads of families contending and depend upon it all their respect is at once at an end and the like discord will spring up among them. There should never - we repeat - there should never be harsh and unkind word uttered by a man against his wife or by the wife against her husband. In the former case it is brutality - in the latter it is insufferable petulance. Husband and wife most certainly should strive for one another's peace and happiness here

and hereafter. If they live together in that unity which is so good and pleasant they will endeavour to comfort one another in times of affliction and to sympathize together in trials. They will manifest by mutual enquiries an anxious interest in each other's welfare especially in the welfare of their souls.

These parents will also mutually unite in exertions to maintain family government. Without the maintenance of order and subordination among the children and domestics all will be confusion and discord. They will begin to govern their children from the first moments of their childhood in which they are capable of obeying and not delay the works till they will have become stubborn and they will listen to no admonitions. It is of the greatest importance that we begin this work in season and make it a thorough work at first: otherwise we shall find that all after exertions will be in vain. *Chasten thy son while there is hope and let not thy soul spare for his crying. He that spareth his rod hateth his son but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*

But mere correction is but a very small part of family government. Besides this there is advice, commendation whenever deserved, blame reproof rebuke admonition expostulation restraint, confinement, rewards, the deprivation of their enjoyments, the infliction of disgrace the denial of favours, etc. And in all these various modes of procuring obedience will the faithful parent be constant and persevering. He will not today set up his authority and compel his children with tyrannical severity to submit to them: and tomorrow let loose the reins and leave his children uncontrolled. The parent who governs well his own house will also be uniformly kind in that government. Whenever compelled to correct he will do it in such a calm conscientious manner that the child cannot doubt he is compelled to it out of a sense of duty. All appearance of anger will be entirely out of sight and indeed all feeling of anger. And should the evil conduct of his children excite for a moment his irrational feelings like the philosopher of old rather than apply the rod under such a state of mind he will say, *I would punish you were I not angry.* In short that is the best kind of family government in which the child is forever to obey his parents because he loves them too well to disobey them.

Such parents will also endeavor to explain to their children and domestics the reasonableness and equity of their commands. They will not desire to be tyrants over them nor to exercise any act of authority for which they are not ready to assign a reason and therefore knowing their children to be reasonable beings they will endeavour to exhibit to their understandings the grounds of their conduct.

In the regulation of their family in these several modes will those parents who are faithful to their trust be diligent constant and persevering. They will establish certain rules for all their household to be observed constantly without a reasonable excuse. They will have certain hours for the various family duties in which all unite and although not unreasonably rigid in their requirements yet they will be firm in demanding obedience and in punishing disobedience.

On the other hand the children of a well regulated family will be uniformly subject to their parents. The will of their father and mother they will regard and ought to regard as their law. They are themselves altogether unfit judges in regard to what they ought to be indulging in and what they ought to be restrained in. *Children obey your parents in all things for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother.* They will regard their parents with respect reverence and love at all times - even when restrained by them from indulgence in those things for which they have an ardent desire realizing that the superior experience and judgment of their parents is better able than they are to determine what will be injurious to them. In their words and actions both at home and abroad they will honor their father and mother and treat them with the utmost affection and respect. To their commands they will be always ready to submit both when they are present and when they are



absent with cheerfulness and readiness well ensuring that all other obedience is abominable in the sight of God. So deep will be their sense of the obligation they are under to their parents that the pain of disobeying them would be greater than the most trying self denial. Feeling obligations they will endeavour to do all in their power to promote the happiness of their parents. And they well know that their amiable and virtuous conduct will be the most effectual method in which this can be done. When their parents are distressed they will be distressed and endeavour to sympathize with them. If they have by misconduct wounded the feelings of their father and mother they will weep over their ingratitude and humbly implore their forgiveness.

And finally all the members of the family we are describing will be constantly endeavouring to improve themselves and one another in knowledge and virtue. Industry will be manifest in all their conduct. When not necessarily employed in laborious manual pursuits they will resort to books whereby they may improve their hearts and minds. The long evenings of winter which those who are poorly brought up usually spend in idleness or in unprofitable conversation will be spent this family in such a manner that they can give some account of them without blushing. The father and the mother will endeavor to instruct their children also by conversation at every favorable opportunity and the children will also endeavor to improve one another in the same way: not by conversing upon the faults of their neighbors or the trifling concerns of the world around them but upon subjects of importance. Especially will religion occupy a conspicuous place: and by the free and easy yet reverential manner in which this subject is treated in such a family a stranger is at once led to conclude that it is a frequent topic in their conversation. The husband often converses with the wife and the wife with the husband - the parents with their children and the children will one another concerning the state of their own hearts in relation to God and if anyone is destitute of religion the others will frequently state to him plainly and affectionately his danger. And if anyone is guilty of doing wrong the others are not backward to give him gentle reproof. In short it is evident to a stranger that such a family is well-regulated and that the members of it love one another with a pure affection and are doing all in their power to promote each other's temporal and eternal welfare.

But their concern and kind efforts do not cease here. For in the second place they feel for their brethren in the world around them and endeavour to do them good. The children are taught to suspect others and treat all men politely and kindly. The parents never set the example before their household of slandering their neighbor nor of retelling their faults and infirmities. They learn their children to treat the reputations of others with tenderness and to censure others for nothing but manifest corruption. They teach them to take a lively interest in the suffering and the welfare of others so that the pleading voice of misfortune and distress never addresses them in vain. The stranger finds under their roof a welcome and a kind retreat and all the members of the family are interested to make him happy. All members of it are taught *to do unto others in all things as they would they should do unto them* and to harbor no resentful or inimical feelings towards any one of the human family. They are taught to esteem others better than themselves and to feel that they are created not merely for themselves not for gratifying their own desires but also for the good of others whose welfare they are bound to consult.

In the third place I am to consider the conduct and feelings of such a family towards God.

The grand secret of the order and unity of this family consists in the parents resolving and persevering in the resolution that *as for them and their house they will serve the Lord*. They feel that they were immortal beings into whose care other immortal beings are committed and that ere long they must exhibit an account to God of the manner they have executed their trust. They resolved therefore that they would bring up their children for God and that they would resolutely deny them all those

gratifications that would be inconsistent with a strictly religious education. Early therefore did they begin even with the first dawning of the infant intellect, to instruct into their minds the great principles of religion. By every method in their power they endeavoured to instruct them concerning the character of God and the plan of salvation by a Redeemer. Early did they begin to pray that these instructions might take root and spring up and bear fruit. From the day in which their children opened their eyes on this world they were accustomed to assemble morning and evening around the family altar and soon as they knew the meaning of the service were they taught to lift up their hearts to God along with their voices. And when the evening bell admonished them that hour of sleep was come they were instructed never to be absent from their Father's house and irregular hours and omissions of family prayer would not be tolerated. And it is these morning and evening prayers my hearers that contribute more than anything else to the good government of a family. If they do not prove the means of the conversion of all the members of the family yet they produce in all habits of regularity and there is an awe and a reverence inseparable from them which operates as a restraint upon every member of it during the day. And how dare any man who is going soon as all of us are to be judged for the manner in which he brings up his family how dare he how can he neglect this morning and evening sacrifice. How dreadful is the example before his household. Let him be ever so faithful in the instruction of his children yet this duty being neglected his words will seem to them mere idle tales which he primarily does not believe! No matter what other things they are taught if they are not taught to pray.

But some one will say I have no confidence to engage in this service. I am only to answer in the language of inspiration. *I would that men pray every where lifting up holy hands.* Another may reply I have no reason to think I am converted and the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Again I answer in the name and by the authority of Jehovah - *I would etc.*

But to return – The children and domestics of the household we are describing are taught to pray not only in the family but also in secret. They are thus made to feel their dependance on God and they are constantly instructed that it is their duty to consecrate themselves entirely to the Lord in body and spirit as their reasonable service. And although all the members may not be actually be born of God yet all have by these various means acquired such a reverence for God and religion and such a habit of essential duty that it may be said of them - they are not far from the kingdom of heaven.

And my hearers how beautifully does the text describe such a family as this! (Repeat it) Yes on such a family the blessing of God will rest. The parents should go and they have the promise of God that when they are old they will not depart. Nay they have a promise [????] the grave. The blessing provided is not temporal it is eternal it is life forever.

And are we my hearers bringing up families in this manner? If not there is awful reason to fear that the prayer of Jeremiah that God would pour out his fury on the families that call not on his name will be answered on our heads. If the picture that has been attempted to be drawn of a family that dwell together in unity will not move us to imitate it then there is another picture which may be presented before us. It is the picture of you and me heads of families, it is the picture of you and me with our children and household standing up at yonder judgment.

I have only touched this morning my hearers upon the limits of an important subject. I have however been purposely brief in my remarks that I might have an opportunity to exhibit to you a continuation of the subject as it is presented by the General Association of Connecticut in the last Pastoral Address to the churches. I could have incorporated it with this discourse putting it into my own language: but I

found the force of it would be weakened and therefore present it in its original form. God permit it may sink deep into our consciences.

Delivered

At Conway Oct 1822

## Sermon 139 Coincidence Between Natural Theology and Christianity in Regard to the Fallen State of Man

[Sermon No. 139, "Coincidence Between Natural Theology and Christianity in Regard to the Fallen State of Man," Romans, 1822 Dec, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 8]

Romans 1:18,19 and 20

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.  
For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made even his eternal power and godhead: so that they are without excuse.*

The sacred writers often direct our attention to the works of creation and providence to prove or enforce the truths of revealed religion. Indeed were we to accustom ourselves to look on the objects with which we are surrounded and contemplate the ordinary events passing before us with a reference to God or religion we should find them full of instruction. All men are sensible it is true that the being and attributes of God are demonstrable from his works. But there are other truths taught in the creation and in providence which many are apt to overlook. The analogy between natural and revealed religion does not terminate with the mere existence of God: but extends also to other important truths and were we able to look far enough no doubt this analogy would be found to reach to every doctrine and every precept of Christianity. As every instance of such coincidence corroborates the faith of the Christian in the divinity of the scriptures and furnishes profitable matter for meditation I shall direct your attention at this time my hearers to the illustration of an important truth revelation from the works of creation and Providence. It is the declaration of scripture that man is in a fallen state - that is he is a sinner exposed to punishment and yet not beyond the reach of mercy. And this same truth is taught by the constitution of the globe we inhabit and by the situation of man upon it. The proposition I shall endeavor to establish from a consideration of creation in providence is that man is placed in a situation partly penal and partly merciful - that is a state in which there is enough of disorder and misery to evince that it is not utterly excluded from mercy and may be restored to the favour of God - in other words is a state in which there are instances enough of good conduct being rewarded to show that God will have mercy on the penitent. To the illustration of this position I now invite your attention.

This illustration I shall derive -

1. From the state of the external part of the earth and circumstances connected with its surface.
2. From circumstances connected with the structure and nature of the human frame.
3. From a consideration of the faculties of the mind.
4. From facts in common life.

But in this place it is proper to remark that the text evidently implies the truth we have laid down. It represents the gentile world as without excuse for being ignorant of the existence and character of the

one and only living and true God. It represents the wrath of God to be revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men even to the heathen who had never heard of the scriptures and therefore must have learnt the lesson from the creation and providence of God as explained and reinforced by the voice of conscience and reason. Because says the apostle that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made even his eternal power and godhead.

I now proceed to consider the conditions of the exterior crust of the earth and some circumstances connected with its surface.

Whenever the globe we inhabit has been penetrated a little below its surface we find, amid evidences of the original order and regularity, other proofs of disorder and convulsion. In one place the deep cavern opens its mouth - in another mountain is rent from mountain - in another rocks are piled upon one another in wild confusion forming the overhanging and dizzy precipice - in another immense mountains of rocks are separated in their midst one part sunk and the other raised many a fathom. In one place we find imbedded in solid rock sea shells and sea animals and in another land animals. Even on the highest mountains do these phenomena occur thus evincing that the ocean once flowed over the loftiest hills. Again we find every where immense blocks of stone scattered over the surface and mixed without order with the soil. Indeed we every where meet with evidences of violent convulsions in former days - by which the earth has been materially changed in its aspect and constitution.

Now if we compare this state of the globe with other works of God with which we are conversant we perceive a striking difference. In every thing else we find an undisturbed and uniform harmony in their construction. Why is this so wanting in the case of the earth? It surely indicates that the present state of the crust of the globe is not the original one but that it has been changed by some catastrophes in former years: and it is a tradition found among all nations from the polished Greeks and Romans to the barbarians of the islands of the Pacific that these catastrophes were the result of the displeasure of God manifested against the wickedness of man. Indeed the violence which the earth everywhere appears to have suffered certainly looks like something penal. And since man is the only accountable being inhabiting it man must have been the transgressor.

The argument my hearers is simply this. A world which was intended to be the residence of a race of perfectly holy innocent and happy beings would not be one bearing so many marks of convulsion and disorder - that is it is not consistent with our ideas of the benevolence of God to suppose he would place them in such a world. And the argument may be extended with even more force to other circumstances connected with the surface of the earth.

I have exhibited to you on a former occasion the ravages made by volcanoes and earthquakes. By these thousands and even millions of human beings have been suddenly swept from existence being overwhelmed by the burning torrent or swallowed up in the opening gulph without any warning or possibility of escape. And this surely looks like something penal in the conduct of the Deity and not like what we should suppose would be his treatment of beings who had never offended. Not that those who have been thus destroyed were sinners above all the others nor that God selected them for punishment because they are worse than others as he did the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah but simply that they like all other men were sinners and exposed to the Divine Indignation.

When we cast our eyes over the map of the history of the globe we perceive that a great proportion of

its surface is uninhabitable. On the one hand are immense regions buried in broken ice and on the other extensive tracts buried in sand or covered by rocks and morasses and thus rendered incapable of culture. Now although there may be important appropriate uses to which such regions are applicable under the present economy of the globe yet their existence is hardly reconcilable with our ideas of a world adapted for the residence of beings who had never fallen from their original condition of holiness and happiness. Very different is the actual state of the world from that Paradise we should picture to ourselves as provides for their residence by a kind and benevolent God. And very different is it from the garden of Eden the sacred scriptures actually describe. Indeed the voice of experience testifies to the curse which the scriptures declare to have been pronounced on the earth at the fall and the thorn and the thistle and still show us that we live in a revolted world.

But although there be so many evidences of convulsion and disorder on the surface of the globe and though the volcanoes and earthquakes testify in their ravages that man is a sinner and that God will by no means clear the guilty and though the curse of barrenness and desolation rest on so large a portion of the earth yet still there is enough order in the construction of its exterior part to show that God stayed *his thunders in mid volley* and did not intend these catastrophes whatever they were to be the final one. There is enough of security from the volcanoes and earthquakes to excite our confidence in the mercy of God and our gratitude for his favors. There is enough of fertility and convenience in many parts of the earth to sustain the heart against despair of the divine forgiveness - enough to teach us how long suffering and gracious God is.

2. I proceed to consider certain circumstances connected with the structure and nature of the human frame.

Man in his infancy and old age is the most helpless and exposed of all animals. Naked and unarmed he comes into the world requiring daily supplies of nourishment without any means of processing it liable to be assaulted by the wild beasts and incapable of resisting them or escaping by flight and exposed to destruction from the elements. Susceptible of powerful impressions from them and unable long to resist the heat of summer on the one hand or the cold of winter on the other without the modifying care of parental affection and superintendence. Were he placed in a paradise where everything was gentle and no extremes of heat and cold with no wild beast to devour and with a spontaneous superabundance poured forth from the lap of the earth were he in such a state such a frame might be adapted for his comfort and happiness. But in the present state of things a constitution so feeble and exposed indicates man to have lapsed from an original state of security and happiness and to be labouring under the displeasure of an offended God. Yet when we consider how well calculated this very feebleness and exposure are to lead man to feel his dependance on God and to put his trust in an Almighty arm - how these things tend to prepare his mind for the reception of the security Christianity provides by the death of the Saviour we are constrained also to acknowledge that this peculiar structure of the human frame is an indication of a merciful intention on the part of God towards the race.

Look also my hearers for a moment at the exposure of the human frame in its present condition to the attacks of disease and pain. The mere existence of these would not indeed prove that they were not an original appointment of the Creator. They might be necessary to remind us how great is the blessing of health and ease but there are numerous instances in which individuals are subjected to pain and disease every day and every hour of their existence from the cradle to the grave. And does this look like a state of original innocence and peace - like the state we should suppose man would be placed in by a merciful God? Consider too the uncertainty of health - how like the vapours that appeareth for a little while it may soon vanish away and the violence with which disease often fastens upon the unsuspecting

victim - not infrequently the tender infant filling it with torture and agony inexpressible. Consider the parental agonies by which man is first introduced into resistance and the limb fractured in the by some untoward accident or the fury of man or vile beasts and surely we discern in all this something of a penal character - some indication that man is in a fallen state.

The necessity of animal food also instructs us in the same lesson. There is something altogether repugnant to our notions of a paradise and the idea that men should be compelled to dip his hands in blood in order to take support of his body. And we find accordingly that man while innocent in Eden had given unto him every herb bearing seeds which is upon the face of all the earth and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed: but no grant was given him to partake of animal food until his fall - *When every moving that liveth has to be meat for him.*

Among the greater evils with which mankind have been afflicted for thousands of years none is more tremendous than war. And none declares to us in plainer language that man has lost the image of his Maker and that those barbarous passions which subject his body and soul to their dominion and flow out into dreadful acts of deliberate and systematic murder must be very different from what they were in a state of holiness and innocence. The permission this scourge has to desolate the earth and to make whole countries a vast Golgotha tells us in language not to be mistaken that man has departed from his original purity and has become deeply corrupted in his heart and blinded in his understanding.

The occurrence of death too in its countless and frightful modes of accident disease famine and the sword - show us that there lies upon us a curse from the Almighty because we are sinners. It then comes upon the new born infant in all its dreadful aggravations - and if man lay not under the displeasure of his Maker it would be difficult to reconcile the melancholy fact with the character of God. In exact coincidence revelation testifies to the fact that *by one man sin entered into the world, etc.*

3. I proceed to consider certain circumstances connected with the human mind.

In all nations of the earth it has ever been found necessary to establish and maintain civil government and to enact numerous laws binding on every individual and society. And why? Plainly to restrain men from the commission of wickedness. Take away these restraints and men would become mutual robbers and defrauders and enemies and petty wars would spring up between neighbor and neighbor and society would become a chaos of bloodshed and misery. All this has been exhibited in the history of many a nation and what is proved by it? Certainly that man is corrupt - that he has corrupted himself - and that evil is the element of his character. It shows the human faculties to be under the dominion of sin - and that a deep rooted depravity lurks within his bosom which demands all the restraints of government and education and good example to prevent its bursting forth into a frightful inundation upon society. And surely it shows too that man has fallen from a state of purity and holiness. For it is irreconcilable with our ideas of God to suppose that such a nature as we find man to possess to have been originally implanted in them by that God whose character we learn from the scriptures is to be supremely benevolent and opposed to sin.

Get in the midst of this wide spread and deep rooted corruption we find some instances of reformation. The drunkard the spendthrift the extortioner the robber and the thief do sometimes cease to be such and become sober members of society and this fact leads the student of natural theology to indulge a hope that God may work a radical change in the character of men and thus restore them to the holiness from which they have fallen.

The intellectual powers of man evince his noble origin and high destiny - but at the same time they appear notwithstanding all that has been done by learning in the world these faculties appear like a lofty edifice in ruins. The most intense application of mind does not always secure the possession of the on thee knowledge we need – nor the most acute discernment arrive at any thing like certainty in its results nor investigation always discover to bring any thing but the hopeless condition of himself. There is a feebleness a cloudiness an imperfection resting on the highest achievements of man producing a painful uncertainty in regard to every object of research.

*What is it to be wise the poet asks?  
Tis but to know how little can be known  
The poet answers - and the virtuous soul  
Now deep sources of knowledge it has drank  
With cordial feeling will respond - amen  
For ah! how weak at best is human intellect  
How many bars impede its every step  
How with corporal grossness mind is clogged!  
Long it must struggle up the slippery steeps  
Of science ere it gain a resting place  
Where clouds and darkness do not hide its view  
And then perhaps the wearied body fails  
And leaves the fattened mind unnerved unstrung.*

But all this retardation uncertainty and weakness my hearers we have every reason to conclude would not exist in a paradise. The conclusion then once more returns upon us that man is fallen and that his understanding is darkened and that the glory has fallen from his brow. But still amid the ruins his intellectual faculties are a germ that may one day rise and bloom in eternal vigor and beauty in the garden of God.

4. I proceed to consider certain facts in common life in relation to our subject.

Nearly all men in order to obtain subsistence are compelled to submit to labour either of body or mind - usually of both. And this simple fact without any explanations might not be regarded as inconsistent with a state of holiness innocence and happiness. Indeed we know that to till the ground was the pointed business of Adam and Eden. And it doubtless would in many ways contribute under given circumstances to the happiness of holy beings. What then are the circumstances attaining human labour in the present state of the world? It usually contributes to health but often men are compelled to submit to it so intensely that it has the contrary effect and impairs the constitution and brings on premature death. We are often forced to labour not merely to set in motion the system but to continue it when that system is exhausted and the labour becomes painful and distressing. The alternative often lies between the actual starvation of ourselves and families or labouring when we are altogether unfit for the effort. And besides we are liable to be utterly disappointed in the results of our exertions. The fire the flood or the unpropitious season may render abortive the most laborious industry and we may thus be left in distress and be compelled to rely on the charity of our neighbours. The manufacturer and the merchant also are subject to the same precariousness in the results of their efforts to support themselves and families and sometimes they fall victims to their possessions. And thus it is that labour becomes a toil instead of a pleasure a curse instead of a blessing. How exactly does this accord with the sentence revelation declares to have been pronounced upon many at the fall. *Cursed is the ground for thy sake. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of*



*thy life. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.*

But on the other hand when we reconsider how happiness results to man from the necessity of laborious exertion - how notwithstanding all failures the earth produces enough to supply in general the necessities and often minister to the conveniences and luxuries of her inhabitants and how sure the industrious farmer or manufacturer a merchant is of a competence we cannot but acknowledge that amid all the evidences that God's displeasure is manifested against sin there also beam forth indications and teachings that his mercy is not clearing out forever but that there is still pardon for rebellious man.

I have but just touched my hearers upon the limits of an interesting and extensive subject. Should any of you wish to pursue it farther I would refer you to a volume entitled "The Testimony of Natural Theology to Christianity." My principal object has been to furnish matter in the objects of creation around you and in the ordinary occurrences of life for profitable meditation. I have shown you that the very earth we tread upon - and the structure of the human body and of the human mind and the ordinary concerns of life all unite with revelation in testifying that this is a fallen and a sinful world lying under the penal curse of God yet not wholly abandoned by him but in a state of mercy. Let the faith of the believer in the truth of revelation be strengthened by this wonderful coincidence between the voice of nature and the voice of scripture. Let the man disposed to doubt the truth of scripture account if he can for this striking analogy. And if he cannot let him acknowledge that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and contains the words of eternal life.

And what a view my hearers does the subject exhibit to us of the evil of sin!

The crust of the earth we find to have been convulsed and thrown into tumultuous disorder - and when we look back into history for the cause the traditions of all nations and the records of holy writ tell us it was the sin of man - which provoked the wrath of God. Yes, my hearers, the very rocks have been rent asunder and dislocated at the sin of man - and shall we be less sensible than the rocks? The weakness and distress to which our bodies are subject - every pain we feel - every sign we draw every calamity we meet - the dogs that obstruct the free range of our intellect - the wars and fighting in the earth - the necessary restraints of civil government - our disappointments and trials and hard labours in our several callings - these and a thousand other occurrence are striking and ever present mementos of the ravages of sin. And shall we encompassed by such a cloud of witnesses remain insensible to its effects? God forbid that we should be unaffected by that which has thrown this world into confusion and filled it with weeping and wailing and blood.

And if we are in this fallen state my hearers and if there is a plan of rescue proposed shall we sit unconcerned under the curse and make no efforts to escape it. It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the same sinners and God is now reconciling the world through Him unto himself. Let us not remain among the number who reject the offers of mercy. Let us rise and burst the chains of sin that we may be among the happy number who shall inhabit the new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and where the disorders sin has entailed upon this miserable world will be succeeded by eternal order and perfect harmony and incomparable beauty.

Delivered

At Conway December 1822

At Greenfield S. Parish 1823

At Ashfield August 1823

## Sermon 142 Inconstancy in Religion

[Sermon No. 142, "Inconstancy in Religion," Galatians 5:7, 1822 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 9]

Galatians 5:7

*Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth.*

*[See the last 4-5 paragraphs where he seems to suggest there has been a decline in religious enthusiasm in his church.]*

The Galatians entered upon the Christian course with alacrity and resolution and seemed to promise much fruit. Paul testifies of them *that if it had been possible they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him*. But during his absence false teachers had come among them and indeed many to reject the doctrine of justification through the merit of Christ alone without works. And when Paul addressed to them his Epistle he tells them in the very beginning, *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel*. They had exhibited a melancholy instance of that fickleness of mind that disposition to follow new doctrines and new teachers of which the history of man presents us so many examples. For the Galatians are not alone in this want of stability and consistency in religion. Many a Christian like Paul has had occasion to mourn over the irregularity and inconsistency in the conduct and feelings of many whom they supposed to be real children of God.

The text then contains a censure of inconstancy in religion. In dwelling upon it I propose to direct your attention

1. To Some marks of inconstancy, and
2. To the consequences of inconstancy in religion.

Marks of 1. inconstancy in regard to religion.

This inconstancy may be exhibited both in regard to the belief and the practice of religion. Men ought always to be open to conviction in regard to every subject and especially in regard to one so important as the welfare of their souls and the character and will of God. But at the same time these things are very clearly revealed in the scripture and he who studies the word of God with prayer will certainly be directed into the belief of the grand fundamentals of the Gospel: and if after a man has done this he frequently is observed to change his views fundamentally – to go from one denomination to another and to be equally zealous for the peculiarities of them all as he successively embraces them we may conclude that he is one of those who are described by Paul as *carried about by every wind of doctrine*. There is such a thing as being rooted and built up in Christ and established in the faith and the man who is in this condition is not to be easily moved from his belief. When a man of contrary opinions reasons with him out of scriptures to correct him to a different creed the texts of scripture he produces are those which this man has deliberated upon many a time and prayed over them with fervency to be guided into the truth. But the man who is unstable took up with his opinions suddenly and without much prayer over the scriptures and although he may be very zealous in his sentiments for a time yet he

cannot stand the trial of his creed because although it may be correct he has not taken the proper measures to form it originally. The firm Christian digs deep and places his foundations sure and though the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon the edifice it stands firm because it is founded on a rock even on the bible. But the man of a fickle changeable character builds on the sand and he is in danger of being spoiled through *philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ and he is apt to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*

And here it may be proper to remark that men who are unstable as water in regard to their sentiments in religion usually manifest more zeal in defense of the various doctrines they embrace than men who abide unmoved by the same faith. This year you will hear them eagerly maintaining those very points which the next year they will zealously oppose. And as they enlist under the banners of different sects they will denounce as fundamentally erroneous all others not excluding even the denomination which in a few months they will join. Now what does this singular fact teach us? It shows that such men are governed by their imagination or feelings more than by the word of God. Whenever the current of feeling flows they are borne along and as it always runs furiously and is as changeable as the moon they of course are urged with equal impetuosity in opposite directions. While the established uniform Christian moves on in calm and steady flow towards the same horizon like the deep and broad waters of some mighty river - these men dash and foam and change their course like a mountain torrent.

As already remarked there is also an instability in experimental religion. Indeed this is much more common among Christians and those who endeavor to be Christians than inconstancy in the faith. There is in truth a degree of irregularity attendant upon the progress of every true Christian. All find themselves advancing much faster at one time than another. But still those who live nearest to God and are best established in their religious exercises manifest so much uniformity in their lives as to give a general consistency to their characters. *Their faith is like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* And it is the duty of all Christians to aim at a perfect consistency and uniformity of character - and the more irregular they are in their exercises and actions the farther are they from the standard of the Gospel. Yet there are very many in Christian lands and in the Christian church whose conduct and exercises this week are no evidence of what they will be next week. At one time their zeal is so ardent that they outstrip everybody else. Their prayers are more frequent in their closets - their bibles are more alluded to - they exhort sinners more - they are more constant in attendance upon the worship of God on the Sabbath and at the other times and seem to feel the worth of souls more than any of their brethren. They complain indeed of the stupidity of their brethren and earnestly exhort them to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. They talk too of the rich enjoyments they experience from the love of the Saviour and a stranger would suppose they never could lose the favour of that love. But let a few months pass over them and you will find them at the antipodes. Their place at the conference and prayer meeting if not in the house of God is usually vacant - sinners are no longer troubled with their exhortations - their closets are an unfrequented place - their conversation and thoughts are worldly and they cannot bear to be told of their apostasy.

A revival of religion gives alas frequent opportunities for witnessing instances of this character. Such persons may well be denominated revival Christians - for it is only at such seasons that they exhibit anything like religion. Then the general attention of those around them to the subject - the contagion of sympathetic feelings and the much that is said upon religion excite within them the kind of zeal which they fancy to be a zeal for God. But as soon as the revival goes by revert to the state in which they were before the works began and there they remain slaves to the world and slaves to sin until some five or ten years pass over them and another revival commences and they go through another exhilarating

process. And fancy themselves on this account to be possessors of religion. That is they make five months of fancied religious feelings to counterbalance the evidence of five years of almost uninterrupted neglect of God and religion. But my hearers these periodical feelings – this excitement of a few months which is succeeded by years of irreligion is no sort of evidence that a man has piety in his heart. *And if ever men are given up to strong delusions to believe a lie* it is such. That holiness without which no man shall see the Lord – that faith which overcometh the world is a thing that abides by the Christian and follows him into all the scenes of life - operates upon him in the hour of business - goes with him when he goes abroad and returns with him to the bosom of his family follows him into his closet - lies down with him at night and rises with him in the morning. It is not a coat that may be worn one month and cast aside five years and then resumed again.

There is another mode in which inconstancy in religion manifests itself. It is that to which the text has special reference. After Paul had gone from the Galatians certain men sprang up among them and endeavoured to persuade them that it was necessary they should be circumcised or they could not be saved and many were drawn away from the simplicity there is in Christ. By turning their attention to this unimportant ceremony they lost sight of the grand fundamentals taught them by Paul and became at length convinced that this rite was essential to their salvation. And thus it has been in every age of the church. False teachers have sprung up teaching some new rite or ceremony or perplexing the minds of honest sincere Christians with some unimportant distinctions so that instead of pursuing *the works of faith and labors of love and patience of hope* they are led away with a blind zeal for external rights and ceremonies and go to content for shibboleths of a party instead of the faith once delivered to the saints. Nay many are induced by designing men to leave the society of their Christian brethren and become the proselytes of some other sect. And the two grand instruments by which these crafty leaders have in every age made proselytes are to represent to Christians that the reason they do not enjoy more of the comforts of religion is because they do not join their party and adopt their peculiarities and that the denomination to which they belong is labouring under persecution. And with these engines notwithstanding they have been so often used many an honest Christian is first perplexed then tempted and then drawn away to the obsequious followers of ambitious men who under the form of godliness deny the power thereof.

Another class of persons (whether they be Christians or not God knoweth) who are changeable with a most unworthy inconsistency in religion are such as commenced in earnest the work of religion: first finding it a very different thing from what they experienced and not being able to obtain certain evidence of their being born of God settle down into a state of dormant inaction and live along with just enough of religious feeling to make them miserable – whereas were they to be active in the cause of the Redeemer and resolve that they will serve God whether he saves them from this misery or not they would find hope and comfort gradually growing up in their hearts and new vigor urging them forward in the path of duty.

Still more inconsistent are those who having had their attention powerfully arrested by the Spirit of God and an awful anxiety excited within them for their souls welfare have notwithstanding resisted all these convictions and are now more careless more secure and more insensible than before. This is an inconsistency so great as to make the Christian shudder with horror for their fate. It is an inconsistency that makes even devils tremble while they rejoice at it.

2. I proceed to consider the consequences of inconstancy in religion.

And first it destroys all decision of character. Even in the affairs of this world if a man have not a steady

opinion of his own he can effect but little. He will meet with so many sorts of advice that he will be left forever in doubt what course to take. Much more in religion will the want of decision neutralize all our exertions. And although the fickle minded man may have for a short time a burning zeal for the particular tenets he adopts yet in a short time he will have utterly abandoned them and such zeal so flashy and changeable does not deserve the name of decision but rather of indecision of character.

Again it usually results in universal scepticism. And why should it not? The man finds himself denying today what he firmly believed yesterday - and how can he tell but he may go on this rendition of opinion until he shall have alternately received and rejected every doctrine of the Gospel. Under such circumstances he suffers himself to reflect he will be thrown into increasing doubt concerning the whole. Unfortunately such a result has often been witnessed in the world. *The prudent man foreseeth the evil and avoideth it but the simple pass on and are punished.*

In the next place inconstancy in religion prevents the formation of religious habits. To get in the habit of leading a godly life is not the work of a day nor of a month nor of a year. There are always a multitude of old feelings and doings that must be eradicated and broken off and then it requires a long time to accustom ourselves to walk in a new path and to turn our affections into a new channel. But the *double minded man is unstable in all his ways*. Before he has travelled far in on path he becomes tired of it and seeks a new one and this also is ere long abandoned for some other course and thus at last death finds him having tried many ways of going to heaven but being after all scarcely advanced towards it (in any part of them).

But my hearers without religious habits we merely have a name to live while we are dead. If a man has not certain stated times for instance in which to pray in his family and in his closet and to read the scriptures and to examine himself and to attend public and social worship he cannot grow in grace. It will not answer to attend these things one week and neglect them the next. Uniformity regularly in religious duties is much more important than ardent zeal and intense feeling today and cold stupidity and neglect tomorrow. For example during a revival of religion you will see some persons always present at every prayer meeting conference and lecture during the week - but when the revival is gone they do not attend even one meeting of this sort during the week - and surely such persons cannot be said to have a habit of attending religious meetings. They attend them only when they are roused up to greater faithfulness in religious duty - that is when they stand least in need of them and neglect them when they begin to neglect other religious duties that is when they stand most in need of them. And the truth is brethren every Christian stands in special need of having his attention called once at least during the week to things of religion - otherwise depend upon it he will find the world to absorb so completely his religious feelings that he will derive little benefit from the worship of God on the Sabbath. Every Christian therefore ought to be in the regular habit of attending a prayer meeting or conference or lecture at least once in the week besides the Sabbath. This will be doing only one sixth as much in this way as did the first Christians: for they *continued daily in the temple*. And surely we are not so much better than the primitive Christians but that we need one sixth as much instruction and exhortation.

But to return another evil consequence of inconstancy in religion is that it exposes a man to become the dupe of imposture. If we have nothing fixed and settled in our religious opinions and if our practice is as irregular as our sentiments we lay ourselves open to the attacks of every ambitious person who wishes to become the leader of a party and to introduce something new. Such a man will be more zealous in making proselytes than most believers are in making Christians. And besides he will not hesitate to practice deceit and intrigue and address himself to the worst human passions - all of which the humble Christian despises. Such a man is more religious than he appears to be - but the man who is compassing

sea and land to make new proselytes will put on the cloak of zeal and piety that *the shame of his nakedness do not appear*. And the unstable Christian will easily be duped by this fair outsider and without waiting to judge of the tree by its fruits he will become the tool of a designing unprincipled sectarian. And so easily are we all inclined to follow anything that is new that unless our minds be established in the truth if we are halting between two opinions or if we have a fickle disposition we shall be entangled in the snare. But decision of character in religion although it does not close our hearts against conviction yet it prevents us from being led astray by any thing superficial.

Another very bad consequence of inconstancy in religion is that it gives the enemies of religion occasion to triumph and confirms them in their opposition. They do not believe that there is anything real and settled in religion - and when they see a professed believer this month maintaining such and such opinions and the next month different sentiments - when they see him now practicing this or that ceremony and soon after rejecting it as untrue - when they see him today at the communal table of one denomination and next year at that of another and the second year at a third they at once conclude that there can be nothing certain in the doctrines of religion and no firm rule of practice else these persons would not thus be as unstable as the wind. And although such a man might retain all the essentials of religion and only be vacillating in regard to nonessentials yet men will not trouble themselves to make such a distinction - but confound the whole together - and condemn the whole in one sweeping sentence.

Another instance of inconstancy in religion at which impenitent men stumble (and I had almost said Christians too) is when a man after having been brought under the convicting influences of the Spirit of God so that it is publicly known that he is earnestly seeking religion and he perhaps is led for a time to suppose that he really possesses it when such an one after a few months are over reverts to their former course of sin and joins his former companions then do the enemies of religion exalt and feel strengthened in their opinion that the notion of a change of heart and of revivals of religion is all a cunningly devised fable. Yes my hearers one such instance of shameful apostasy (let those who are guilty of it listen to the awful truth) one such instance does more to prejudice men against the truth - to harden the heart and to stupify the conscience than a whole years preaching of the apostle Paul would do to the persuade men to believe the Gospel. Those guilty of such apostasy are the men against whom the ungodly point the finger of scorn and sneeringly ask are these the blessed fruits of your religion? These in fine are the persons that tie the hands of the faithful minister of Christ - that hang like a dead weight upon his efforts - that make him weak in his closet and despair of many ever being useful.

An effect little less unhappy does it produce to have persons of hopeful piety so irregular in their religious duties and their attendance upon the worship of God in the sanctuary and on the social prayer meeting and conference as to be a thing of general notoriety. What must be the conclusion when as sometimes happens those who profess to have no religion are yet more uniform in their external religious duties and in the attendance upon the social conference and the prayer meeting than those who profess to be the children of God! What I say must be the effect of this upon an ungodly world.

Another consequence of instability in religion is that it takes away scriptural and rational ground of a man's hope that he is a Christian. The progress of the believer in holiness is described in the bible by the figure of the shining light shining more and more unto the perfect day - and by a reference to the growth of plants and animals. But the light of the day does not come on by a succession of flashes succeeded by darkness: but it gradually increases upon the darkness by an almost imperceptible addition. And neither do plants or animals attain their size by alternately increasing and then remaining stationary but by a gradual enlargement of all of their parts. If then a person finds his religion to be that

inconstant unstable thing we have described he has surely reason to fear that it is something different from the religion of the bible.

And finally instability and inconstancy religion puts the salvation of the soul in danger. How irregular a man may be in his feelings and vacillating in his sentiments and yet be a Christian I shall not attempt to decide. But every degree of this instability is dangerous because if we are unsettled in regard to lesser things we may soon become so in regard to fundamentals. In religion when we begin to depart from the standard of doctrine or practice given in the bible there is no telling when we shall stop. A fathomless gulph yawns before us and before we are aware we may be at the bottom. *He that wavereth, says the apostle, is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

These are some of the prominent consequences resulting from instability and inconstancy in religion. And let them my brethren induce us to enquire of ourselves in the language of the text, *ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth.* Is not much of the constancy above pointed out to be found in our experience? Are not we the very persons Paul meant when he said *ye did run well*? When the Spirit of God was specially among us comparatively we did run well. But look at the awful change a few months have made in us. And what is it that has hindered us? Is it the departure of the Spirit of God we charge it upon? The Spirit of God! We drove him from our hearts and resisted his influences. It is the worldly mindlessness of our hearts. It is the selfishness of our souls that is ruining us. But is it not high time to awake out of sleep? Is it not high time to be more consistent and uniform? Is it not high time for us all my hearers to choose whom we will serve and no longer halt between two opinions. Death and the judgment are near us and what we do must be done quickly since there is no work nor sense nor wisdom in the grave whither we are hastening. *Therefore my beloved brethren be ye stedfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Delivered

At Conway December 1822



## Sermon 143 Advent of Christ

[Sermon No. 143, "Advent of Christ," Luke 2:10-11, 1823 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 9]

Luke 2:10-11

*And the angel said unto them fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.*

*[Interesting discussion about celebrating Christmas, paragraphs 1-3; the rest is about the world before Christ's birth.]*

There is some probability that this is about the season of the year when the Saviour was born. A considerable part of the Protestant Christian world regard the 25th December as the time of his nativity; and devote that day to a celebration of the interesting event. The precise day however in which the angel uttered the joyful words of the text is probably unknown and will always remain so to the inhabitants of this world. For in former times we are told by one of the ancient fathers of the church that Christmas was celebrated on the sixth day of January. Others also suppose that his birth must have happened in September or October for he said that there was at that time *shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night*. And although the climate of Judea is less severe than with us yet is it so severe that the idea of shepherds abiding in the fields at night agrees better with September or October than December or January.

If Christians however agree in fixing upon a certain day to be observed as the time of our Saviour's birth it is of little consequence whether it be the real time or not. And as to the propriety of commemorating this event there can be but one opinion if it be commemorated in a proper manner. That it is a matter of great importance to set apart a certain day however and make it a holiday does not appear. For had it been so the scriptures surely would have informed us of the precise day on which the Saviour was born. Perhaps this was omitted that men might not carry the observance of such a season to excess as they are prone to do in such instances. Thus the Church of Rome observes so many feasts and fasts that men lose sight altogether of the essence of religion and rest satisfied with its shadow and besides the poorer classes have not time to attend to their ordinary and necessary concerns.

Still however to commemorate the birth of the Saviour in a religious manner is consonant with scripture and reason. It called forth the song of angels, *glory to God in the highest - peace on earth and good will to men*, and surely it ought to draw forth a responsive song from the hearts of man. From the text I have chosen you will readily perceive my intention of directing your attention to the subject at this time. I propose to consider the grounds the angel had for saying to the shepherds that the Saviour's birth was good tidings of great joy to all people. And in following out this enquiry I shall first set before you the general state of the world at the time of his birth and secondly consider the changes which that event produced.

1 Examine the state of the world before the birth of the Saviour.

And my hearers there is a description of the state of mankind at this period drawn by the pen of

inspiration. Paul has delineated with a strong and faithful hand the character of the heathen. And at the time of the Saviours advent all men were heathen except the small nation of the Jews. *When they knew God, says he, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: and changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile afflictions: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient: Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.*

What an awful description my hearers is this of the great mass of mankind! And in it are comprehended polished Greece and Rome. Yes those nations whose literature and arts have been the theme of admiration in every succeeding age - and whose poets and orators and historians are more studied and better known in our higher schools of learning than the bible - these nations does the apostle speaking by the inspiration of God charge with all these abominations. Indeed the polish and refinement of literature and the arts although it may give a new direction to vice and cover up depravity with a few external decencies still has no power by itself to counteract and destroy that corruption. Nay it lends new charms to sin and introduces a spacious refinement in iniquity of which the barbarian is ignorant. Let the ardent admirers of Greece and Rome remember that with their poetry and eloquence and patriotism and philosophy there was positively no fear of God before their eyes. And the poison of asps was under their lips. And to the correctness of the horrid description of Paul the Roman historian Tacitus has borne ample testimony. And of such was the morality of Greece and Rome we cannot expect to find it more pure among the uncivilized part of men.

When we look at the religious systems of the Greeks and Romans and other heathens we find the source whence this awful corruption sprang. For corruption in practice always follows error in belief. And when we read of 30,000 deities who were worshiped among these nations when we read of the characters they gave to these gods representing them as governed by the vilest of human passions and entering into petty quarrels with one another in the gratification of these passions when we read the thousand wild and extravagant and licentious stories the history of these deities furnish we no longer are surprised that all flesh had corrupted the way of God and human depravity and exhibited itself in its most odious forms. For the fruits of such systems might be expected to be a state of morals dreadful beyond all conception.

But were there not certain individuals among these heathen certain orators and philosophers who were free from these pollutions? Were we to judge from the eulogies they have given of virtue in their writings we might suppose them exempt in a good degree from the general corruption. But we are assured on good authority even the authority of one of these philosophers himself that they did not pretend to follow the maxims they so beautifully inculcated. And it is well known that the most upright among them gave a license to some of the vilest of crimes in others and practiced them themselves.

But did not these philosophers attain to more purity in their opinions? Some of them agreed in favor of the existence of one God but still a thousand doubts beset them on this article. Some also argued in favour of the immortality of the soul but the wisest of them declared in the end that they rather wished this to be true than believe it. And if such was the sentiment of philosophers what must have been the darkness that enveloped the mind of the common people in regard to future existence! Indeed those who did profess a belief in this doctrine found no other notion of another world than as a place of refined sensual enjoyment. And even if some did hope to live beyond the grave they were altogether in doubt concerning the terms on which they should be accepted of God. Short futurity to the wisest of the heathens was but an inextricable maze - of dark unexplored gulf across which no path had ever been marked and beyond which they could see nothing but fleeting shadows and uncertain twilight. All of them could join the poet in saying:

*The wide the unbounded prospect lies before me  
But shadows clouds and darkness rest upon it. [From a poem by Joseph Addison]*

And surely such crude and uncertain views of another world can have but a feeble effect upon man in restraining them from the commission of sin or initiating them to the practice of virtue. It needs a special voice from the Almighty to tell man that he is immortal or he will never firmly believe it and nothing but the punishment of sin in eternal woe on the one hand and the reward of righteousness on the other in the everlasting joys of heaven can operate upon the skeptical and unfeeling heart of man or restrain the torrent of iniquity within him from bursting forth in a frightful inundation. All the reasonings of philosophy all the native sensibilities of the heart apart from the awful sanctions of Jehovah fall on the ear of man like an idle tale and utterly fail of working any permanent reformation. The discerning eye of Socrates the wisest of all the philosophers saw the correctness of this assertion and he declared to his disciples that they might grieve over all hopes of amending mens manners for the future unless God be please to send some other person to instruct them.

Such was the dismal condition of the world at the birth of the Saviour. Nor was that of the Jews much preferable. They had corrupted and neglected that religion which God had entrusted to their care. And when Paul drew the frightful picture of the heathen above recited he addresses the Jews and says, *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin.* The forms of godliness existed among them but the power was gone. One sect among them even denied the resurrection of the dead – a degree of hardened scepticism scarcely known even among the heathens – and to sum up the whole in one sentence Christ calls the generation then living *a generation of vipers*.

The whole world then at the birth of the Saviour was covered with an Egyptian darkness and gross darkness spread over the people. The whole face of it exhibited almost one unalleviated spectacle of all that is corrupt in principle and all that is degrading and abominable in practice. Selfishness reigned supreme in the heart of man while living and an impenetrable cloud rested upon the future when he died. But the star arose over Bethlehem and ushered in the rising Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings.

I proceed secondly to consider the change that took place in the condition of the human race upon the Saviour's birth.

And first that Saviour disclosed the true character of God.

In all human discoveries however splendid there is always in the first efforts a degree of imperfection - some remains of former errors mixed with the truth which time only can separate. But in the midst of the darkness of paganism and the corruptions of the Jewish system of religion Christ exhibited the character of God in a manner not to be amended or altered. He makes no ideas of matter in his descriptions but represented God as a perfectly pure spirit - a supreme eternal almighty omniscient omnipresent independant unchangeable perfectly wise perfectly holy perfectly just perfectly benevolent being - a pure undenied essence - in his nature incorruptible in his counsels unchangeable between whom and sin there is an everlasting and unconquerable repulsion and who will reward with everlasting felicity holiness in his creatures. Christ did not endeavour in his words to soften down one attribute of the deity nor associate a single material conception to accommodate the character of God to the gross notions of the Heathen - but his language is *God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth.*

By his own sufferings unto the death of the cross that he might magnify the law and make it honourable he also unfolded the holiness and justice and mercy of God in a manner so striking and impressive and fill the soul with reverence and godly fears. Even the Jews who acknowledged the existence of one God were prone to regard him as altogether such an one as themselves - but Christ taught them that all mankind were the objects of his care and not merely the Jews and that *in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.* While they supposed themselves the peculiar favorites of heaven on account of their supreme sanctity he told them that *God had mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth.* And that *the purpose of God loved Jacob and hated Esau* their forefathers *that his purpose according to election might stand not on works but of him that colleth.* He taught them also that *he and his father were one and that he that had seen him had seen the Father.*

Such a God as this was a very different being from the God whom most of the Jews worshiped and infinitely different from the abominations of the heathens.

In the second place the coming of Christ introduced into the world a pure system of morality.

The moral maxims of our Saviour may perhaps all be picked up in the writings of heathen philosophers. But they were so mixed up with absurdity and so destitute of authority that the most of them were wholly ineffectual in restraining man from sin. But Christ separated the wheat from the chaff embodied morality into a system and gave it a new and interesting dress and enforced it by the most awful of all sanctions viz. the commands of God and the pains of hell and the joys of heaven. And in the system which he inculcated he made no compromise with the lusts and sinful propensities of man, but declared to all his followers, *he that will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow after me. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth into life.* This was a system alike hateful to the hypocritical Pharisees and the corrupt heathen. It demanded purity of heart and intentions as well as of conduct. In short whenever it was introduced it created a new race of men - who *loved their neighbours as themselves and did unto others as they would others should do unto them.* Had Christ never been born we should now be sunk in all the immortality of heathenism. To him we owe all that is decent and kind and honorable and trusting and benevolent in society.

Thirdly by the coming of Christ life and immortality were brought to light.

Man was no longer compelled to grope his way through life and enter the dark dominions of the grave

with nothing but the dim wax taper of philosophy. A messenger appears from heaven to tell man that he is immortal. He declared that the hour is coming in which *all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and come forth*, and he that was dead obeyed the penetrating call and shook off the hitherto unbroken slumbers of death. O what a glorious testimony was that to the power of the Redeemer to bring forth in like manner all who slept in their graves! How in a moment did the grim messenger lose half his terrors and what a new aspect was put upon the dignity and the destiny of man. Before that period he had lived as if this world were his only home. But the world now shrinks into a point before an opening and a boundless eternity! Man is immortal: glorious truth! Then how different should be his actions his motives and his desires from what they would be were he only mortal! He is immortal - he should therefore live for immortality. And when that Saviour himself burst the bars of death and returned again to his disciples not merely a living spirit but a living body what a glorious corroboration was thus afforded to man's future existence and how certainly was his resurrection from the grave established. All the remaining darkness that rested on the grave was now rolled away and a clear and a certain path was made across the dark gulf into which so many millions had entered without one ray of light or of hope to guide their steps or support their souls.

In the fourth place by the coming of Christ a way was opened in which man might become reconciled to God.

It was of vast importance that Christ should communicate a knowledge of the character of God and arrange a system of morality and show to man clearly that he is immortal. It was important too that he should illustrate what religion is by his own perfect example. By doing all this he rolled away a dark cloud of ignorance from man and opened celestial joys to his view and elevated him higher in the ranks of beings. But had he done no more than this all this increase of knowledge would only have added a keener sting to the miseries of man. For there stood between God and man a wall of separation which neither man nor angels could remove. Men had all sinned and come short of the glory of God and there could be granted no pardon until someone should stand in the place of man and endure the curse of a broken law. While this remained undone God could appear to man in no other aspect than as a consuming fire. This then was the mighty work which lay before the Saviour – a work too mighty for man or angel to perform. For they owed all the services of which they were capable to their Creator and therefore could make no atonement for the offenses of others. But the Saviour being in the form of God and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God was competent to the vast effort and he invited the wine press of God's wrath and trod it alone. In Gethsemane and on the cross he bore the curse of a broken law being made a curse for us. It was the language of the law that without shedding of blood there is no remission. But Christ hath redeemed us to God by his blood. By his obedience he evinced to the universe the excellence of God's law - by his sufferings he showed its strictness and now *God can be just while he justifies the believer in Jesus*. When that Jesus cried on the cross *it is finished* in a moment the wall of separation between God and man crumbled down and now *God is in Christ reconciling himself the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them*. He has been *made a propitiation for the sins of the whole world* and his disciples may now carry the offers of salvation without misery and without price to every human being. Glory honor and immortality are now held out to every son and daughter of Adam and it is nothing but our own voluntary obstinacy and willfulness that can prevent the whole human race from embracing them. And many very many will embrace them.

But in the fifth place not until their hearts are made willing by the Spirit of God and the provenance of the heavenly messenger to convince the world of sin of righteousness and of judgment to come was another of the blessed effects resulting from the advent of the Saviour. The mind of man may be ever so much enlightened by a knowledge of life and immortality - and conscience may be loud in her demands

upon him to act agreeable to this knowledge. Nay an atonement may be made for him and Almighty God may urge him by all the terrors of hell and all the joys of heaven to believe on his Son and be saved - still the heart of man would remain as unsubdued and alienated as ever standing out in stubborn and unyielding defiance of the authority and mercy of God unless some other agent almighty also be brought to operate on his opposition and turn his eyes on the cross. Then and not till then will the human heart yield to the influence of religion and devote itself to the service and the love of God. And this object too was effected by the wisdom of the Saviour. The Holy Spirit grieves as the sword of his agonies and obedience does enter with an almighty power the heart of many a rebel and implants there a holy principle and cause it to flourish and increase till it expands in eternal loveliness in the garden of God in heaven.

And now my hearers what a contrast have I presented before you in the condition of the world before and after the Saviour. If men have not realized all the blessings which his advent brings along with it the fault is altogether their own and we ought not to be the less grateful on this account for the birth of a Saviour. To him we owe it that we are not more sunk in the disregarding corruption and superstitions of heathenism. To his advent we are all that is really valuable in life and all that supports us in death. The hope of heaven rests on his merits alone. O what a joyful event is the birth of such a Saviour! *Good tidings of great joy it is indeed to all people who have received it. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem: for the Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations. Glory to God in the highest peace on Earth good will to men.*

But what if after all we obtain no interest in that Saviour. Then will his coming aggravate our final condemnation. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for him. *He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses - of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God.*

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## Sermon 145 Hungering After Righteousness

[Sermon No. 145, "Hungering After Righteousness," Matthew 5:6, 1822 Nov,  
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Matthew 5:6

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

The constitution of man is such that he must feel ardent desires prompting him to diligent exertion after some object. The objects that excite this longing in men are very various. With the avaricious it is money - with the hero it is glory - with the ambitious it is dominion - with the learned it is fame - with the gay it is splendor - with the debaucher it is animal gratifications and with the religious man it is righteousness. Yet though thus diversified are the pursuits of men corresponding to their ruling desires yet the objects they are seeking may all be comprehended in the general classes viz. a desire after the things of the world and a desire after righteousness or holiness or generally speaking the things of religion. For desires after worldly objects are all essentially the same only modified by peculiar circumstances. Thus the avaricious man although apparently so far from being a spendthrift can in fact very easily become so - nay strange as it may seem the love of money - the ardent, the miser-like love of money is sometimes connected with the love of spending it in the same man so that today he is a keen parsimonious miser and tomorrow the loose spendthrift. The same man who becomes a hero might had circumstances favoured as readily have been a soft voluptuary. The particular worldly object of our supreme desire becomes such by mere accident. For our hearts by nature have little choice in the particular worldly object on which to fasten.

But when we come to compare a desire after any worldly object with a desire after holiness or righteousness we find the case very different. A supreme love for anything worldly and a love to religion can by no means inhabit the same bosom. There is a wide and impassible gulph between the two things. There is an eternal repulsion between them and they cannot be made to coalesce. The debaucher can have no real desires after holiness until he ceases to desire the gratification of his lusts. The miser will not earnestly long after a likeness to God until he ceases to worship his gold. *For no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* The man ambitious of worldly applause must cease to regard this as his supreme good ere he can feel sincerely desirous of the applause of his God. *For how can ye believe that receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only.*

The ground then on which all human desires are referable to two grand classes is obvious. And we perceive also that there is an alternative before us in the case. It must be with us either a supreme desire after the world or a supreme desire after righteousness. There is no such thing as mixing the two together. And it is left to our free and uncontrollable choice to select between them. The question then occurs which is the best? If we wish to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season and then die in despair and to sink into eternal misery let us choose this world and make it the object of our supreme regard and desire. But if we think it better to suffer affliction with the people of God for the short term of our lives and then to die in peace and enter into eternal glory - let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

In the text the Lord Jesus tells us that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are blessed and shall be filled. But on the other hand when is there any such promise made to a hungering and thirsting after the world? Yes there is a promise to such - *they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices.*

By the term righteousness doubtless chiefly intended holiness or as resemblance to God. For to desire to be holy is to desire to be like God. And whoever desires this will desire as a consequence every moral and Christian virtue and grace. He will long to fulfill all his duty to God to mankind and to himself. To hunger and thirst after righteousness then is to have an ardent desire to resemble God. To such desire a blessing is promised. Permit me in pressing the subject.

First to illustrate what it is to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Then secondly to show in what the blessedness consists.

1. I am to show what is implied in hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

And among other things it implies a deep sense of our unrighteousness or unholiness. No man is hungry but he who is destitute of food. If a man is already filled with food or drink he cannot be hungry or thirsty. So a man who is possessed or imagines himself possessed of a competent share of righteousness can not have any ardent desires for more. He who can say or think in his heart, *I thank God I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice a week I give tithes of all I possess.* Or he who can say I do not think myself any worse than my neighbor and do not fear but I shall be happy in another world if I do as well as I can in this and am sincere in searching for the truth. Such men can never have any intense desire after a likeness to God - for the plain reason that they already suppose themselves enough like him to go to heaven. But it is the man whose sense of unworthiness compels him to exclaim, *Lord I am vile - God be merciful to me a sinner - I am less than the least of all Saints - I am wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.* This is the man who really hungers and thirst after righteousness. He feels sin and corruption within him to be a dreadful burden. His ungodly dispositions - his unsubdued heart - his obstinate will - his neglect of his closet of the scriptures of the warnings and exhortations he hears - and of his duty to his fellow man - his cold and formal performance of those duties he attempts - the frequent triumphs of his pride over humility - of his anger over his reason - of his murmurs over his contentment of his tongue and his thoughts over the restraint of religion and of his worldly over his heavenly affections all these teach him a most forcible lesson showing him in language not to be mistaken that there is a mighty and an overwhelming power of depravity within bearing along his whole soul in its resistless current - and enveloping in him all holy desires and right motives. And under the pressures of such things as these the man is found to exclaim, *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death:* and most ardently will he long after an almighty power to subdue his depravity and to make him holy as God is holy. With the Psalmist he exclaims, *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

And is there not many a soul before me now uttering the responsive amen to these sentiments. Is there not many a heart borne down with a sense of inward corruption of misspent time of wasted opportunities and of poorly performed duties that longs earnestly longs for deliverance. Has not many a sigh of sorrow been sent up to heaven this day by many of you my brethren because you feel yourselves so unholy and are not your desires going up even now earnestly and diligently after holiness and God - panting after him in the expressive language of inspiration as the hart panteth after the water brooks?



Do you not feel as if the possession of this whole world - of this whole material universe would be of far less value than one iota of holiness. When you look into your yourselves and see how unholy you are and then contemplate the blessedness of those who are like God do you not feel as if you could not be denied as if you must be delivered from the bondage of corruption - as if your mind must be made like Christ and have him formed in you the hope of glory? Is not every other desire feeble in comparison with this intense hungering after righteousness and do you not feel as if you could be denied everything else but could not be denied that holiness of heart without which no man can see the Lord? If such are your real feelings brethren there is reason to hope that you are the persons meant in the text to whom the promise of blessedness is made.

Another thing implied in hungering and thirsting after righteousness is a deep sense that righteousness can come only from God.

It is not impossible indeed for a soul that feels its need of holiness to long for it - whatever be the source from which it proceeds. But if we mean to have the blessedness promised in the text we must hunger and thirst after righteousness in the manner there pointed out. And the text tells us that such a man shall be filled - not that he can feel himself - not that he can cultivate any native propensity to holiness and thus satisfy his appetite but we shall be filled from that fountain whence cometh down every good and perfect gift. That man only who feels his entire dependance on the sovereign grace of God to supply his spiritual wants will be led to seek for their supply in a proper manner. The child does not go to its parent for food when food is within its reach. A man who has abundance of provisions set before him cannot be made to feel that he is a beggar and that he shall starve without foreign assistance and so long as food is within his reach he will not come knocking unto earnest importunity at your door as a famishing outcast. Nor will a man go with strong crying and tears to God for spiritual food - nor will he feel that he is starving for want of the bread of life so long as he can obtain righteousness anywhere else. If therefore a man is puffed up and believes that he is something when he is nothing and to suppose that he can be righteous or increase his righteousness without the special influences of the Spirit he is not in the proper frame of mind - he is not in a standing perishing frame - for seeking to God for the manna of heaven and God says to all such as he once said to the Laodiceans, *Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and blind and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see.*

Again to hunger and thirst after righteousness implies diligent and earnest efforts to obtain it.

It is no uncommon thing to find professed Christians who will acknowledge their great depravity and holiness of heart and life and who will declare themselves earnestly to desire a closer conformity to God - but who never proceed any farther than this and sit down in contented stupidity. When pressed for the reason of their continuing so far from what they ought to be they will perhaps say that they are dependant on the grace of God for righteousness and they must wait therefore till God please to bestow it. Thus making the doctrine of divine agency on the heart an excuse for continuance in sin. But such persons will have the vengeance and the wrath of God poured out upon them much sooner than his grace. For God gives his spirit to those and those only who feel their constant obligations to love him supremely. If such a course be not what Paul meant by continuing in sin that grace might abound I know not not what that is. But will a man who is really hungry make no effort to obtain food? Will a thirsty man sit down contented without seeking for water? No the person in a state of starvation will not content himself with reasoning on the improbability of his findings any food if he attempts it. But his

appetite will urge him irresistibly to search for it even if there be scarcely a possibility of his obtaining it. To the man who is hungering and even to starvation for Spiritual food will resort to God who alone can supply him. He will most earnestly pray for grace to keep him from sin and his lamentations of his corruption will be louder when alone before God than before men. The eye of God will often witness the holy desires of such an one in his closet. And such a man will actually take up his cross and endeavor to follow Christ. He will not wait till God actually bestows a blessing upon him - but will resolve to serve the Son and live to his glory whether his prayers are answered or not. He will set himself to the diligent performance of duty knowing that although God will not give him his grace as a debt due to his exertions yet it is while performing their duty that men receive it and not while he continues in sin. Let a man pray even so earnestly for holiness yet if he do not break off his evil habits - if he do not avoid temptations and sinful companions - if he do not mortify the deeds of the body - if he do not war against his lusts and the sin that most easily besets him and endeavour to resist his propensity to love the world supremely - his prayers are mere vain words - they will never be answered. The man has no real desires after holiness. His pretended wishes to be like God are merely selfish and not the fruit of the Spirit. He has some idol which he hankers after more than after righteousness.

Having attempted to show what is implied in the hungering and thirsting mentioned in the text I proceed secondly to consider in what the blessedness promised consists.

And first this promise does not imply that those on whom it is bestowed shall be perfectly happy in this life. If this were implied then no man has ever yet possessed it since no Christian has ever attained to this state of perfect enjoyment. Nay the most devoted believer has often to struggle under a load of trials and infirmities so that he sighs for a discharge from the warfare. And it may frequently be said of those who sleep in Jesus that *through much tribulation they have entered into the kingdom of God*. The most severe afflictions - the keenest sorrows do not therefore show a man to be no sharer in the blessedness mentioned in that text.

Nor in the second place is it implied in this blessedness that a man shall show assuredly that he is a recipient of it. To be blessed indeed means to be in a truly happy state. But a man may be in such a state before he knows it. What if the criminal lay in his dungeon waiting the approaching day when his life would pay the forfeiture of his crimes! But suppose a reprieve awaited him to be communicated not until the moment of his execution. As you saw him led forth to the scaffold you would regard him as a really happy man although he regard himself as of all men most miserable. So a man may have been a rebel against God and be brought under condemnation of eternal death and he suppose that the time is at hand when the sentence will be executed without alleviation. But in the meantime the sentence against him may have been removed by the governor of the universe although no messenger has been dispatched to inform him. Surely that man is blessed for he is adopted into the family of God and an *inheritance incorruptible undefiled and that fadeth not away* awaits him. And we have reason to believe that there are many who seek the Lord all their lives sorrowing and conclude themselves given over to everlasting ruin without remedy will find when the executioner of death comes to perform his office that a reprieve is ready for them from their fears and their condemnation and they are going to be blessed forever.

But notwithstanding all this a part of the blessedness of the text is usually experienced even in this life. Some who hunger and thirst after righteousness amid all outward troubles find a peace which the world can never give nor take away and which passeth understanding. Nay we read of a *joy unspeakable and full of glory* among those who were regarded as the fifth and offscouring of all things and who were persecuted and like their Father had scarcely a place to lay their heads. And even where little of comfort

is experienced by the Christian yet he finds a calmness which he formerly knew not and a fortitude under trials and a comparative unconcern in regard to worldly changes. Nay ask the most responding desponding Christian - the man who looks upon himself as given over to a reprobate mind but who earnestly longs to be converted - ask such an one whether he is willing to exchange his present condition of gloom and distress for his former condition of unconcern and worldly enjoyment and he will answer no. This shows that even he poor and miserable as he regards himself receives more comfort even from longing for holiness than does the man of the world from his most enticing pleasures.

But in the third place the chief of the blessedness of hungering and thirsting after righteousness is future. (It is said such an one shall be filled not he is filled). Another world will develop the glories that await him and then no tongue of men or angels will refuse to call him blessed. His desires then shall be gratified. The thing he hungers and thirsts after will be given him. Sin will no more possess and torment him - but righteousness pure and universal will possess his soul. All will be peace and harmony within his own bosom no jarring elements - no opposing nations - no flesh and Spirit - but it will be all holiness and all happiness. He will there also be blessed in his society. In God he will have an exhaustless foundation of righteousness without any alloy. His Redeemer too will exhibit that glory and that immaculate purity which becomes him who knew no sin and he will see the robe of that righteousness by which he was saved. The Holy Spirit too the Comforter the Sanctifier and the Purifier of the soul will be there his eternal friends. And all the noble company of angels and redeemed from among men will be his companions in not one of whom will be found anything but unmingled holiness. There then the hungry soul will be fully satisfied and the thirsty soul be thirsty no more. He shall be filled - is the glorious promise. The fullness indeed will go beyond his largest desires. An exhaustless fountain of holiness will be before him forever from which he can forever drink. Never will God cease to be holy or himself cease to be happy. For the stream of God's benevolence will flow and overflow through all eternity.

Now I say my hearers that the subject shows us how important and how glorious it is that our desires should be heavenly and that we should earnestly wish to become like God. If there are any whose hearts do really hunger after holiness and thirst day after day and month after month it gives me pleasure to pronounce them blessed. For I have *received a commandment to bless and God hath blessed and I cannot reverse it*. It may be that your ardent desires after righteousness are mingled with tears of distressing anxiety lest you are the cursed of God - and shall be compelled finally to take up your bed and hell. But though *your weeping may continue for a night yet be assured joy will come in the morning. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me says the prophet because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the Spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of Righteousness - the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified*.

And next I say as a second inference from our subject that it teaches us what a state of degradation and corruption it manifests not to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Such a man does not relish anything that is really good. Unless he desire holiness he desires not a resemblance to God - nor to the Saviour nor for the influence of the Spirit nor the society of any holy being. What then does he desire? and relish. His desires are *earthly - sensual - devilish*. And he relishes only those things that will ultimately make him miserable.

But many a man whose character is of this stamp will fancy that he does desire to be holy. But he

hungers and thirsts after heaven not after righteousness. He desires to be happy - but not to be like God. All men have this kind of thinking - after heaven but few hunger and thirst after true holiness.

And are there not some of us my hearers who have none of this earnest desire for righteousness but who are indifferent and unconcerned on the subject? Shall I call such blessed? How can I bless whom God has not blessed? Not hunger and thirst after righteousness! What then do they desire? They are full of the desires after the world. But will this satisfy them. Let those who have drunk deepest of it answer - and they will tell you that *it is even as when a hungry man dreameth and behold he eateth, but he awaketh and his soul is empty - or as when a thirsty man dreameth and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh and behold he is faint and his soul hath appetite*. While the man whose desires are heavenly will find them filled to the overflowing the man whose desires have been earthly will find that he has *sown the wind and must reap the whirlwind - it hath no stalk. The bud shall yield no meal. Thus saith the Lord, behold, my servants shall eat but ye shall be hungry - behold my servant shall drink but ye shall be thirsty; behold my servant shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart and shall howl for vexation of spirit*.

Delivered

At Conway November 1822

At Amherst E. Parish April 1825

At Shelburne July 3 1825

At Deerfield North Parish April 1827

At Amherst West Parish November 1831

At Amherst West Parish February 1846

At Enfield August 1837

At Hatfield October 1843

## Sermon 148 Power of Musick

[Sermon No. 148, "Power of Musick," I Samuel 16:23, 1823 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 9]

I Samuel 16:23

*And it came to pass when the evil Spirit from God was upon Saul that David took an harp and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed and was well and the evil spirit departed from him.*

I present myself before this choir of singers and this audience as one who makes no pretensions to an accurate acquaintance either with the science or the practice of musick. It will not therefore be expected that I should attempt any critical remarks upon melody or harmony. But there are some other bearings of this subject that may not be uninteresting on this occasion. You will therefore permit me to request your attention to this discourse founded on 1 Samuel 16:23.

Saul had abandoned God and God abandoned him to the influence of an evil spirit. *The Spirit of the Lord*, says the historian, *departed from Saul and an evil Spirit from the Lord troubled him*. As he would not listen to the admonitions of Jehovah he was judiciously left to be impelled by this spirit of darkness to the indulgence of his rage and jealousy and suffered to be oppressed with deep melancholy and great terrors and groundless suspicions. An awful warning to those in this generation who shall resist the Spirit of God!

But my intention at this time is to direct your attention to the remedy adopted to charm away foul spirit. It was no other than the harp of David who afterwards became the sweet psalmist of Israel. And it seems the intended effort was produced at least for a time by his performance. We have then in this case a striking instance of the power of musick over the human heart. And from this history I shall take occasion to direct your attention to the power of musick generally on the passions and affections.

By the term Passion is understood *a commotion of the soul attended with pleasure or pain, affecting both the mind and the body and arising from the view of something which is, or appears to be, good, or evil, or uncommon*. (Beattie) Some of these are violent and impetuous in their nature - such as anger hatred avarice ambition revenge excessive joy or sorrow and all other moderate passions. These alone in the strict sense of the word are denominated passions: while those that are calm and gentle as benevolence, pity, sympathy, gratitude and all other innocent and virtuous emotions are generally termed affections. Most of the passions and affections belonging to the human constitution when restrained by the rules of reason and revelation are productive of happiness: but there are a few that in their nature produce nothing but misery to the soul and seem to proceed from unalleviated depravity such as pride, envy, and malevolence.

But not to multiply remarks of this character I proceed to observe that the passions which music excites in the human heart are all of the agreeable kind. Thus devotion cheerfulness courage compassion pity, etc., are called into exercise by the power of melody - but there is nothing in that art that tends to cherish or increase impiety anger envy or malice. A man indeed under the powerful influence of such passions is said to be incapable of performing a piece of musick. Thus it would be utterly impossible for

one in the paroxysms of rage to exercise his vocal powers. So that musick not only does not encourage malevolent passions but tends to destroy them, and this is no small recommendation of the art apart from other considerations.

It is true indeed that musick is sometimes made to serve base purposes. The ambitious warrior stirs up this up the courage of his soldiers by the drum and the trumpet. But courage is not in itself an unworthy passion. It is only its perversion that can render it so. And the low debaucher may have the vilest of passions excited by the bacchanalian or the libidinous song. But in this case it is not so much the simple melody that fires him with low desires - but chiefly the vulgar and demonizing language with which it is coupled. Musick pure and uncontaminated in herself shrinks from the degrading alliance. And to set to a beautiful piece of musick the immoral and rotten sonnet of a drunkard or an adulterer is like tying the widow of Malabar to her dead husband for the funeral pile.

Musick then when not perverted by an unnatural union with discordant language nor combined with low and unmoral associations tends to excite only the more agreeable and tender passions and thus to soften down those that are more ferocious and productive of misery. The effects of musick therefore on the passions and affections may be comprehended in the following general statements.

1. It tends to soften down and eradicate the more corrupt and savage passions and affections of the human heart.

2. It tends to excite cherish and strengthen those passions and affections that are agreeable useful and holy.

I shall now proceed to an elucidation of these two propositions by an appeal to sacred and profane history.

1. Musick tends to soften down and eradicate the more corrupt and savage passions and affections of the heart.

Among all the nations and tribes that now exist or ever have existed on earth we have no account of any in which musick was not cultivated as a part of their national customs. However rude may have been their melody still it comprehended the groundwork of the art. And as these nations advanced from a state of barbarianism toward civilization they have uniformly advanced in their musick. Nay it is the testimony of almost every nation that musick preceded the other arts and contributed extensively itself to the civilization of kingdoms. The ancient Greek writers give to this art a power superhuman in taming the ferocity of uncivilized man. You have all heard no doubt of the fables concerning their Orpheus and Amphion the first of whom is said to have opened the gates of the infernal regions by lulling to sleep the grim keeper of it and to have almost brought back to the upper world his departed wife - and the very trees of the forest are said to have been drawn after him by the power of his lyre - and to the other the very stones listened and rose miraculously into the wall of Thebes. Passing by these fables we find that such men as Orpheus and Amphion did exist and that they were distinguished not only as poets and musicians but as legislators. The truth is all barbarous nations who begin to emerge from such a state have all their laws human and divine written in poetry and set to musick and in Greece these were sung publicly in chorus to the sounds of instruments. And these two men being eminent musicians were able to impress their laws upon the minds of the people by the charms of musick and thus did they gain a powerful influence over them and contribute extensively to their civilization. Thus testifies the Roman

poet:

*The wood born race of men when Orpheus tamed  
From acorns and from mutual blood reclaim'd  
The priest divine was fabled to assuage  
The tiger's fierceness and the lion's rage  
Thus rose the Theban wall; Amphion's lyre  
And soothing voice the listening stones inspire  
Poetic wisdom marked with happy mean  
Public and private, sacred and profane. [Source: Horace, The Art of Poetry]*

That musick by assuaging the angry and tumultuous passions of the inhabitants exerted a powerful influence in the civilization of Greece cannot reasonably be doubted. One of the most eminent and able historians declares that the Arcadians were distinguished for their humanity and that it proceeded from the knowledge of musick. And he ascribes the barbarity of their neighbours the Cynethians to their neglect of it. And it is well known that a knowledge of this art constituted an essential part of the education of the Spartans being regulated by law. Their musick however as Plutarch testifies was of a manly simple and majestic kind - and was not calculated to produce that effeminate licentiousness which has been exhibited on the theaters of ancient and modern times.

There can be no doubt that musick has had a powerful influence in the civilization of the barbarous nations of Europe. Who has not heard of the Bards of the Celtic nations that formerly spread over the west of Europe? These were a distinct class of men who were supported by the public and whose business it was to celebrate the history of the tribe and the exploits of their hearers in poetry set to musick. And in all their military expeditions the chiefs were accompanied by one or more of these bands. Who does not perceive the influence of musick in the amiable and gentle manners of the untutored Caledonians as exhibited in the poems of Ossian? *The song comes, says that poet, with its musick to melt and to please the ear. It is like soft mist that rising from the lake pours on the silent vale. The green flowers are filled with dew. That is such mournful songs have a happy effect to soften the heart and to improve it by tender emotions as the moisture of the mist refreshes and nourishes the flowers.*

To illustrate still further this idea of the assuaging importance of musick on the passions of man we may appeal to the holy scriptures. And a case more in point cannot be found than that mentioned in the text. The darkest and most violent of passions were rankling in the heart of the king of Israel and an unseen malignant spirit was fanning those passions with the breath of hell. Yet the heart of David allayed for a time the tumultuous storm. In this effect there appears to have been nothing miraculous. The sweet tones of the harp of a simple shepherd soften the raving feelings of the king so far that the infernal spirit knew it to be vain to resist so powerful a spell and he departed. A strong testimony surely to the power of melody and one that almost leads us to regard the fables of Orpheus and Amphion as true!

Any one who reads the Old Testament must see how musick was interwoven with all the customs of the Hebrews and what an influence it exerted upon that nation. The greater part of the old testament it is well known was written in poetry and set to musick. And theirs was altogether sacred musick - tending not merely to soften the unruly passions but to turn all the nobler feelings to the solemn realities of religion. Even the miracles God wrought among that people were frequently attended by musick as the destruction of Jericho by the trumpets and ram's horns sounding: and it was no uncommon thing for their prophets to deliver their inspired messages with musick as an accompaniment. Saul when he

became a prophet *met a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery and a tabret and a pipe and a harp before them and he prophesized*. And Eliza could not predict the success of Jehoshaphat against the Moabite until he had sent for a minstrel who played before him.

Were it necessary to illustrate any farther the effect of musick in calming the passions I might appeal to your experience my hearers. How often have you found the tumultuous feelings of your bosoms quelled in this house of God by one of the songs of Zion and a sober serenity come over your souls preparing you for the worship of God without distraction. And who is there that has not heard on some still evening when the moon shone in soft lustre over the world and the gentlest breeze did not move the serene air who at such a time has not heard the soothing and solemn tones of sacred musick coming from a distance while the whip poor will echoed her responsive note! And who did not find that musick to soothe and settle down his whole soul into a calm as great as that of the surrounding scene and who at such a time has not joined the pact in singing

*Methinks it sounds much sweeter then by day*

*Silence bestows that virtue on it.* [Source: *The Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare*]

Is there before me a mourner who has been called to part with a friend whose life was dear as his own? He then can bear testimony to the soothing influence of the sacred and plaintive hymn that formed a part of his obsequies. Although that musick caused the tears to flow - yet it was a tear

*That gives the mourners swelling bosom vent*

*Quenches the anguish that would else consume*

*And flowing through the channels nature formed*

*Softens the heart that else would stiffen into stone.*

When our Saviour entered the ruler's house where his daughter lay dead he found the minstrels playing the solemn requiem and indeed the practice of performing musick over the dead exists in every nation savage or civilized - an evidence that all have found its power to be soothing to the violence of grief.

But I proceed to the second statement that musick tends to excite, cherish and strengthen those passions and affections that are agreeable useful and holy.

Its influence on the field of battle in rousing the courage and nerving up the sole to the moral conflict has long been known and celebrated. Sometimes indeed (alas very often!) the ambitious conqueror turns that courage so roused up sum up into a wrong channel uses it as the instrument of the misery and subjugation of the innocent and peaceful. And the philanthropist will regret that it is ever necessary to *stiffen up the sinews* for the slaughter of man. Still there are but few who do not feel that the oppressed in the present state of the world must in extreme cases resort to the sword. And in such a case musick exerts a most powerful influence upon them in subduing the fear of death and in strengthening them to resist oppression.

Musick is also an eminent promoter of love of country. In almost every kingdom there are what are called national songs to which the people become ardently attached and by which they are through the assistance of a thousand fond associations an ardent affection for the land of their fathers. The Swiss national song is well known beginning

*O when shall I visit the land of my birth*



*Tis the loveliest land on the face of the earth.*

And when the Swiss soldiers were employed in foreign service it was found necessary to forbid the playing of this to them under pain of death - as it immediately drew tears from their eyes - caused many to desert - others to commit suicide and left others to pine away and die with broken hearts. It ought here however to be remarked that all this must not be imputed exclusively to the power of musick. The thousand tender associations and recollections the musick brought along with it had a large share and an astonishing effect.

[Insert] *When Edward the first conquered Wales he put to death all the Welch bards. This policy plainly shows how great an influence imagine the songs of the bards to have over the minds of the people and of what nature he judged that influence to be.*

Another most touching instance of like character related in the xxxxxxx. The Jews whose national songs were musick of the temple were carried away captives to Babylon. And then says the historian *we hanged our harps upon the willow thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasteth us require of us mirth, saying sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* The moment they struck the notes of one of the Zion's songs the temple of God with all its grandeur and solemn and delightful services - Jerusalem itself with their friends and thousand fond recollections rushed upon their souls with a redouble force and the love of country rose to such a pitch that they felt every vocal power dying within them.

The effect of musick in rousing men from a state of torpor to a state of activity is well - known. The history of the cure of the bite of the tarantula - a large spider found in Italy - exhibits this effect in a striking light. The poison of this insect produces a torpid sadness and failure of the senses. And the physician's art can give no relief. But musick comes forward to save the dying man. A brisk tune excites a lively joy and gladness and rouses the patient to active exertions and the poison is thus counteracted and thrown off. It ought however here to be mentioned that this statement although coming from the highest authority is of late opposed by equally high authority.

Although the spirit of chivalry that appeared in Europe when the nations were emerging from the dark ages was productive of many extravagances yet it no doubt contributed to the civilization of the world and to the cultivation of the softer and more refined feelings. Yet chivalry to its rise from poetry and musick. Indeed in every age the effects of the finer social feelings has been particularly manifest - so that it is scarcely an exaggeration to say

*These polished arts have humanized mankind  
Softened the rough and tamed the savage mind.*

From the power of melody and harmony in quelling deep and fierce and consoling passions and affections and in exciting cheerful and lively lives ones they have had a very great influence over the health. A physician who was also an eminent poet thus closes his rules for preserving health -

*There is a charm, a power, that sways the breast  
Bids every passion revel or be still;  
Inspires with rage, or all your cares dissolves;  
Can sooth distraction, and almost despair.  
That power is musick:*

*Musick exalts each joy - allays each grief,  
Expels diseases, softens every pain,  
Subdues the rage of poison and of plague,  
And hence the wise of ancient days adored  
One power of physic melody, and song. [Source: Art of Preserving Health, Armstrong]*

The awakening and strengthening influence musick has on the religious feelings would require a volume to describe. But I trust the delightful experience of very many of my hearers can testify to its power. Therefore such descriptions is less necessary. How must the song of Moses at the passage of the Red Sea have caused the bosoms of the Israelites to swell with an overflowing gratitude to God for his deliverance! And how animating the song of Deborah and Barak? How must every tender and holy feeling have been brought into the liveliest exercise by the hymn him the Saviour sang unto his disciples at the close of the eucharist but before he was betrayed:

*How sad the Saviour's song! How sweet! How holy!  
The last he sung on earth - how melancholy!*

When Paul and Silas lay bound in prison at Philippi how interesting how solemn how animating that prayer and that song of praise which they offered up at midnight when suddenly *there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bands were loosed!* With what overwhelming power with what awakening interest must the full swell of voices and instruments in the Jewish temple have burst on the soul and lifted it towards heaven. And how often in these times does the Christian find his devotional feelings carrying him above the world when the sacred songs of Zion with a thrilling interest enters his heart!

Delivered

At Shelburne February 1823

At Conway March 1823

## Sermon 149 Terms of Communion with One Another at the Lord's Table

[Sermon No. 149, "Terms of Communion with One Another at the Lord's Table,"  
Galatians 5:6, 1823 Feb, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 10]

Galatians 5:6

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing  
nor uncircumcision; but faith, which worketh by love.*

*[A discussion of the question of who can partake of communion.]*

The many bitter controversies that have been carried on among Christians about unessential points of doctrine or practice and the consequent alienations and jealousies between brethren and their separation from one another to form distinct churches refusing communion with each other has long been a subject of deep regret among the sincere followers of Christ.

They have mourned in secret places that the church which is called in scripture the body of Christ and which he so earnestly prayed might be one as he and his Father are one should be split up into so many denominations distinguished from one another in most instances by unimportant peculiarities. And ardently do they pray for that time to come when there shall be but one fold and one Shepherd - one Lord - one faith - one baptism.

It is not merely the fact that there is a diversity of opinions among real Christians upon unessential points of their faith this fact is not what distresses most deeply the real lover of the cause of Christ. For from the nature of the human mind and of the bible he might expect this diversity. But on account of these differences merely men have established numerous and separate communions excluding those of other denominations from a seat of the Lord's table at the same time that they acknowledge them to be Christians and this appears so contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel and so detrimental to its progress that every real lover of Zion is distressed at the picture and feels desirous of doing all of this power to rectify the abuse. But an important question occurs him in setting about the business and that is what are the real grounds of Christian communion that is what are the terms on which a professing Christian church is to admit to her sacramental communion those who apply for admission. Until a man has some distinct ideas on this subject he will prove but a miserable reformer. He will be apt to adopt the sweeping sentiment that such a church is bound to admit to communion all who make application and thus annihilate at once the distinction between the church and the world and make the world the church and the church the world. To exhibit the true scriptural grounds of Christian communion is my intention in considering the text I have just recited to you. And I shall endeavour to prove from scripture the following proposition that no church has any right to require as an indispensable condition of communion any thing more than a professed believe in the essential doctrines of the Gospel and a correspondent practice.

This proposition is thus expressed by Robert Hall an able Baptist writer in his late work on Christian communion. *No man, says he, or set of men are entitled to prescribe as an indispensable condition of*

*communion what the N. Testament has not enjoined as a condition of salvation. Another able writer on this subject thus expresses the same thing: no qualification for sacramental communion may by the law of Christ be exacted from any individual other than visible Christianity - that is a profession and practice becoming the Gospel without regard to those sectarian differences which consist with the substance of evangelical truth. [Source: Anderson, 1820]*

Before entering on the direct proof of this proposition it may be proper in order to avoid all misapprehension to make a few remarks concerning the term essential doctrines - as applied to the Gospel. When I speak of an essential doctrine I mean one that cannot in ordinary cases be disbelieved or rejected without destroying the soul. How far it is possible in certain cases for a man's head to be wrong while his heart is right I shall not attempt to decide. Yet it would seem no reasonable man can deny that there are some truths of religion which a man who has a capacity and opportunity to understand them cannot deliberately tonight without forfeiting his salvation. Thus the man in a Gospel land who in the unclouded use of his reason denies the existence of God or the inspiration of the bible or the immortality of the soul such a man infallibly cuts himself off from the possibility of salvation unless he renounce those errors. On the other hand there are some parts of the Gospel system the disbelief of which does not infallibly destroy the soul. Such was the distinction between meats and days as mentioned by Paul and whether Christians ought or ought not to be circumcised. Men might maintain different views of these subjects and yet be real believers and members of the invisible church of Christ.

It ought here however to be remarked that the very smallest errors voluntarily embraced may ruin the soul - because it may indicate a state of heart prepared to resist the obligation to receive and obey the truth. The amputation of a man's finger may be the means of the death of the body but not infallibly - the cutting off a larger member is still more liable to destroy the life. And just so the denial of even the least truth of revelation may prove the eternal death of the soul. The denial of a still more important truth is still more dangerous: but the willful voluntary deliberate denial of the essentials of the gospel as certainly produces the ruin of the soul as to cut off a man's head or run a dagger through his heart terminate his mortal existence.

But it may be asked how we shall distinguish between an essential doctrine of the bible and one that is unessential? To draw a line between these is in some cases a delicate and a difficult task. And it is not my intention at this time to attempt such a classification of the Gospel doctrines. That such a distinction exists - that it cannot be destroyed without destroying religion is all that is necessary for me to maintain at this time. I remark however that it is often easier to determine what are not essentials of religion than to determine what are so. So that in determining whether the man who offers himself to our communion believes in all that is essential is often a task not so difficult as we are apt to imagine. I would remark too on this subject that in most cases essential error in belief is not confined to one point but extends usually to so many point that little doubt can remain in the minds of real Christians - and he who receives one essential doctrine of pure revelation is not apt long to delay seeing all others that are important. And I cannot but add that in determining what are the essentials and what are nonessentials of religion we are to be guided by the scriptures themselves and are bound to make no more fundamental than they have made.

I now proceed to the proof of the proposition that no church has any right to require as an indispensable condition of communion any thing more than a professed belief in the essential doctrines of the Gospel and a correspondent practice.

And first I infer the truth of this proposition from the character of the church as given in the bible.

The term church as used in the New Testament when not designating a place to worship denotes either the whole body of Christians on earth or some one assembly of them in a particular place. And the latter sense differs from the former only as a part differs from the whole. The scriptures nowhere speak of two churches on earth - but when they mention more than one they mean merely the parts of the church universal. The idea that there could be two distinct churches maintaining separate communion tables is entirely unknown to the scriptures. In the last prayer the Saviour offered up for his disciples including all his followers to the end of time he besought that they all might be one as he and the Father are one. And the object of this union he declares to be that the world might know that he was sent from heaven. As if nothing could more effectually convince men of the reality and excellence of vital religion than a union of the church - as if nothing could operate to confirm their prejudices and strengthen native opposition so much as a division in the church. To make nonessentials therefore a ground of debarring a Christian from the sacrament table is directly opposed to the Spirit of the Saviour's prayer.

This unity or oneness of the church is evident from every other definition we have of it in the bible. In the old Testament it is represented as the spouse of Christ. Witness the whole of Solomon's Song: and Isaiah says in addressing the church, *Thy maker is thy husband: the Lord of Hosts is his name: and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel*. The same figure is frequently used by the New Testament writers and surely nothing can more certainly evince that the real church of Christ is one than such a figure.

Another figure by which the church is described by the apostle is the *household of faith*. That is all the real members of Christ's church sustain towards one another the intimate and endearing relation of those who belong to the same family. How inconsistent does it appear for such to refuse to each other a participation in one of the most tender and interesting ordinances by which the children of God are distinguished from the world - viz. the sacramental supper!

Another very favorite representation of the church by Paul is to give to it the appellation of the body of Christ. To the Romans he says, *as we have many members in one body and all the members have not the same office: so we being being many are one body in Christ and every one members one of another*. To the Corinthians he says, *as the body is one and hath many members and all the members of that one body being many are one body so also is Christ. For by one Spirit - are we all be baptized into one body whether we be Jews or Gentiles whether we be bound or free and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*. The apostle then proceeds to show how the natural body although composed of different members still does not lose its unity. *God hath tempered the body together says he having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body but that the members should have the same care one for another. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular*. How irresistible the conclusion from hence that there should be no schism between those who constitute Christ's body! Although in minor things they might differ from one another as the several members of the body differ among themselves yet they all agree in being a part of Christ - in having new hearts and in possessing faith that worketh by love. And therefore they ought no more to separate from one another's communion than the members of the human body ought to be at variance and warfare. A similar view of this subject is given by Paul in the fourth chapter of Ephesians which it is unnecessary to repeat.

Having thus endeavored to establish the propriety of catholic communion among all those who hold the heart that is the essentials of the Gospel from the bible description of the church I proceed to prove the same thing from the history of the church as given in the N. Testament.

I shall hear only advert to certain facts in the bible that relate to this subject.

In the primitive church in the days of the apostles and for many years subsequently its unity was preserved in almost uncorrupted purity. All who embraced the essentials of the Gospel however they might differ in nonessentials presumed not to separate themselves from their brethren and spread another communion board. Some indeed denied the essentials of the faith and went out from the church thus showing that they were not really of it. And others made some attempts to excite schisms among brethren and draw them them off to an exclusive communion. But in the effort they met with the most pointed reproof of the Apostles and from this fact I argue that real Christians ought not at this day to refuse communion to one another.

A striking instance of this effort to produce a division in the church is recorded in the 15th Chapter of Acts - *Certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* Paul and Barnabas therefore were departed to go to Jerusalem to consult the apostles and elders concerning this matter. During the consultation Peter said, *Why tempt ye God to put a yoke up on the necks of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we are able to bear. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they.* And finally this august council came to the result that, *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost into us to lay upon you no greater burthen than these necessary things that ye abstain from meats offered to idols and from things strangled and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well.* Had these schismatics succeeded in obtaining the opinion of this council that circumcision was one of the essentials of religion the consequence would have been a separate communion. But the elders and apostles were satisfied that the Gentiles would be saved as well as they and that and that too without circumcision and hence this could not be one of the fundamentals of religion. This instance clearly shows the ground on which the apostles admitted anyone to fellowship viz. a belief in the essentials of the Gospel and a correspondent practice.

This same subject of circumcision was repeatedly a source of difficulty in the apostolic age and it required repeated and earnest efforts from Paul and the other apostles to fervent a schism on this account. The text was written in reference to this subject. *I testify, says Paul, to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to the whole law. Christ is become of more effect to you whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision: but faith which worketh by love.* The grand enquiry in regard to a man was whether he possessed saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ - if he did it was of no consequence as respected communion with him or his salvation whether he were circumcised or not. And if such was the chief question in apostolic times it is the chief one that ought to be made in these later times.

Among the Corinthians a spirit of division had arisen and unhappily and unhappy contentions sprang up between brethren about unessential points. And although these Corinthians had not gone so far as to separate into different communions yet listen my hearers to the decided reprobation of their conduct with which Paul addresses them - *Now I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you my brethren and by them which are of the house of Chloe that there are contentions among you. Now this I say that every one of you saith I am of Paul and I of Apollos and I of Cepheus and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the image of Paul? I thank God that I baptize none of you but Crispus and Gaius - for Christ sent me not to baptize but preach the Gospel.* It was his commission to enforce the grand fundamentals of religion and not to dwell upon those things that were

not essential to the system of revealed truth nor to a man's salvation. And it was because the Corinthians were contending about these things and ranging themselves into parties that Paul reproofs them thus severely.

Among the Christians at Rome there was a diversity of opinion in regard to certain Jewish legal rights and ordinances. And Paul most faithfully warned them against separation on this account. *Him that is weak in the faith receive you but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea we shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in this brother's way. I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink: but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And on this same subject Paul says to the Corinthians, when ye so sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience ye sin against Christ.* In all these reasonings the apostle evidently proceeds on the supposition that the matters in dispute were not fundamentals of the Gospel. For he says of those who differ from him that eateth that God had received him - and that God would hold him up - and that *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Thereby plainly intimating that their errors if they were errors were not of such a character as to prevent them being accepted of Christ. And on this principle he deprecated the idea of their being separated into different communions. The principle he would support is plainly this that those who have communion with Christ ought to have communion with one another. And during the apostolic age and for a considerable time afterwards the church acted on this principle and was united and happy. But alas! how different it is in these times! How very common is it for those of our denomination who acknowledge those of another to be real Christians believing in all the essentials of the Gospel and practicing accordingly nevertheless deny them a seat at the Lord's table.

But let us my Christian brethren free ourselves from the guilt of this unscriptural bigoted counsel. Let the grand enquiry with us be whether a man has that faith which worketh by love - and if he has let us not dare refuse him a place at the Lord's table; for we should remember that it is indeed the Lord's table and not ours and that therefore every real Christian has a right to a seat at it. And let us not by any means or covenant require of any man a belief in any thing more than the essentials of religion. It is a delightful consideration that more correct views on this subject are spreading among Christians and that the true church of God is rapidly uniting and that the petty divisions among brethren are yearly looked upon as of less and less importance. In promoting this spirit missionary exertions have had a most happy effect. May God hasten on the time when pious watchmen shall see eye to eye and there shall be but one Lord one faith and one baptism.

Delivered

At Conway February 1823

At Amherst College December 1839

## Sermon 150 Only One True Gospel

[Sermon No. 150, "Only One True Gospel," Galatians 1:6-9, 1823 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 10]

Galatians 1:6,7,8 and 9

*I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

*[This manuscript includes some 22 pages, many of which are crossed out in part or in full. I have transcribed only those parts that are not crossed out. There appear to be several endings on gray paper.]*

*[This is an important discussion about telling the true gospel from false gospels and also about what are the essential Christian doctrines; it reveals a lot about Hitchcock's attitudes toward Unitarians, Baptists, etc., though he never mentions them. Also at the end (around page 18) he seems to be suggesting people have a right to pursue any faith, although this may be a rhetorical device, i.e. Devil's advocate.]*

And first we learn from the text that there is a true gospel and a false gospel.

Paul declares himself and his fellow laborers to have preached to the Galatians the true gospel and that false teachers had preached to them a false gospel. So wide was the difference between the two systems that the one would prove the everlasting salvation of their souls if embraced and the other their everlasting destruction.

Paul says let the man be accursed who preaches a gospel different from the one preached by him or let him be an anathema or something devoted or separate to destruction - let this come upon the man yea if he be an apostle - if he be one of us - if he be an angel from heaven and if there were no such thing as a true gospel - if the fundamental doctrines that gospel could not easily be determined this would be a most unrighteous sentence.

There is a general disposition among men to believe that the essential truths of the bible are not very clearly defined and that in fact it will make but little difference in regard to our final condition whether we embrace one system of doctrines or another provided we be sincere. But a very different view does the text present. It plainly intimates that there is one and only one system of doctrines in scripture by which a man can be saved. All other systems however plausible and by however great talents they may be supported are in the view of the apostle radically wrong and destructive to the soul.

And with this view of the subject coincides other parts of scripture. Peter tells the Christians to whom he wrote that there would be *false teachers among them who privately should bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction; and that many would follow their pernicious ways.* And Paul speaks of some *who had made shipwrecks of the faith whom he had delivered over to Satan to learn them not to blaspheme*, and he expressly declares that



there is but *one Lord one faith one baptism*. Now all these passages plainly imply that there is one and only one gospel by which man can be saved - and that any system which leaves out or denies one or more of the essential truths of religion is a false gospel and he who preaches it a false teacher.

2. I infer from the text that men are able to determine what is the true and what is the false Gospel.

What I mean is that men who have the bible in their hands can easily determine the grand outlines of gospel truth and hence also determine when their teacher deviates from it. If this were not the case if those doctrines which they must believe in order to be saved are not most clearly marked on the pages of inspiration of what use would the scriptures be? If the way of salvation is not described in scripture so plainly that *the wayfaring man need not err therein* the bible serves only to perplex and distress men and the religion of nature would be preferable. And if there be any obscurity in regard to what the essential doctrines of the Gospel are how could Paul blame the Galatians for embracing another Gospel? He is even astonished that they had done this: but it would surely have been a matter of no surprise if there had been any obscurity in those grand fundamental truths of which he had preached to them.

But it may be asked how an ignorant man when he sees men of equally good talents and apparently equally honest differing concerning almost every point of revelation how shall this ignorant man decide which of them believes in the true Gospel and which in the false? Surely if men of extensive knowledge and apparent candor differ so much in their opinions God will not punish the ignorant man if he should hence up to embrace the erroneous system.

If the ignorant man resorts to the writings or conversation of the learned in order to determine what is the true Gospel he will indeed be as liable to embrace error as truth. But human controversies however able and learned are not the source from which he should derive his system of religion. *He has a more sure word of prophecy to which he will do well to take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place.* The bible is the fountain where he can learn what God has revealed: and it does not demand great talents or extensive knowledge to determine from this what are the great truths of religion. It requires only two things to enable any man of common sense to ascertain all the doctrines of the bible that are essential to his salvation viz. a *right state of heart and humble earnest prayer*. The man who reads the scriptures with these qualifications is better prepared to determine what is the true gospel of the grace of God than he who can bring the whole circle of literature and science to his aid but is wanting in these. It is not learning it is not an ability to criticize the scriptures that is necessary for understanding their fundamental truths but it is an honest mind - it is a praying Spirit. Possessed of such a heart we are assured by God himself that *the wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein*. But no such promise is made to learning. On the contrary we are told to *beware of philosophy and that knowledge puffeth up: but charity edifieth*. If therefore men do not and fancy they cannot distinguish between a true and a false gospel the reason is that their hearts are not right in the sight of God. *How can ye believe that seek, etc.*

3. From the text we learn that men are bound to determine what is the true and what is the false gospel upon the peril of their salvation.

The sentence Paul passes upon the false teachers who preached the gospel to the Galatians implied nothing less than the loss of their souls. He declares them to be anathema that is an accursed thing devoted to distraction - for that is the meaning of the phrase. And unquestionably the ground on which he pronounced their doom in this solemn manner was that they were fundamentally erroneous - that is they inculcated opinions that would ruin the soul. And if the Galatians neglected to determine

concerning those opinions it was at the peril of their salvation. For those errors that will destroy the souls of the minister will if embraced destroy the souls of the hearers.

There are some indeed who suppose that men will not be judged of God for their religious opinions but only for their feelings and affections actions. But the truth is every religious feeling and action is formed on a religious opinion and the character of the action will wear precisely the character of the opinion. Did not Paul in the text regard religious sentiments as of unspeakable importance when he says, *Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached into you let him be accursed?* Does not Christ represent religious opinions as of some consequence when he says *he that believeth shall be saved - he that believeth not shall be damned*. Why were Hymenaeus and Alexander delivered unto Satan? *Because they made shipwrecks of the faith*. Did not John consider religious sentiments of importance when he said *he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed*.

4. The text teaches us that there are doctrines of revelation the belief of which is essential to salvation.

By an essential doctrine I understand to mean the rejection of which in ordinary cases infallibly destroys the soul. I do not include the case of the heathens or idiots nor of insane persons (no attempt to decide how far in such cases the head may be grieving while the heart is right) – not wishing...

*[Several lines are crossed out in pencil]*

But I mean that those who have their reason in exercise and have the bible in their hands are bound to embrace certain fundamental truths or they can have no well grounded expectations of heaven. When Paul so forcibly represents the consequences of rejecting the true Gospel he certainly implies this. For it was the disbelief of the true Gospel that would bring an eternal curse upon the false teachers and there must have been something in that Gospel that was essential to salvation. The particular doctrine from which the Galatians had departed was justification by faith in Christ. This will be evident to anyone who will read attentively the whole epistle most of which is occupied in establishing this very point. This doctrine does indeed lie at the heart of the Christian system and whoever rejects it rejects the gospel method of saving sinners.

*[Several lines are crossed out in pencil]*

Here then is one grand fundamental of the gospel. But an important enquiry arises how we shall distinguish a fundamental doctrine from one that is not so? For every age men have been inclined to multiply essentials and to teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Far be it from me if I know any thing of my heart to wish any thing to be made an essential of salvation which is not made so in the bible. Indeed all men who believe in revelation will acknowledge that there are no fundamentals of religion except those contained in the Scriptures. We may then lay down the following rule for determining what doctrines are central to salvation what are not so, viz., *no doctrine is to be regarded as essential that is not expressly declared to be so or plainly implied to be so in the bible*. From such a rule as this it would seem no one can dissent.

That some doctrines are expressly declared to be essential to salvation by the sacred writers cannot admit of a question. Take for instance the doctrine of justification by faith, the departure from which was the other gospel of which Paul speaks in the text. By asserting that those who denied this doctrine

were accursed he plainly represents a belief of it as essential to salvation. But in the next chapter he expressly declares that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. And in the third chapter he says as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident. And this same unqualified declaration he repeatedly makes in his epistle to the Romans. If his words are true then the doctrine of justification by faith without works through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus is essential to salvation.

In a like and decided manner Christ declares with a repeated emphasis that *except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*. No man therefore who is not born again ever will enter heaven. It is certain therefore that the doctrine of regeneration by the special agency of the eternal Spirit is another of the essential doctrines of salvation.

Christ also has said *he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*. A belief then in the true character and offices and works of Christ is essential to salvation.

*[Most of the next four pages are crossed out in pencil.]*

...are certain what his opinions are upon the fundamentals of the Gospel. And a fair teacher at first employs such ambiguous expressions that one man will understand him one way and another man a different way. Were he first to declare his sentiments openly Christians would immediately take the alarm and abandoned him. But he held up the cross before him for a time in order to conceal the dagger which he is about to plunge into the vitals of Christianity.

6. From the text I infer the necessity of an assent to a creed as a condition of communion.

If it be true that there is a true and a false gospel - if it be true that men are able to determine what is the true and what is the false gospel - if we are bound at the peril of our salvation to determine this - if there are some doctrines of revelation that are essential to be believed if the true gospel may easily be prevented and men led astray into fatal errors then surely it would seem important that the essentials of this true gospel be collected together and that a man be enquired whether he assent to them before the church receives him into her bosom as a new creature in Christ Jesus as one who *will contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints*.

But some one will ask since the bible contains all the essentials of salvation and all have agreed in making this the standard by which every doctrine is to be tried why is it necessary to have any other creed than merely to enquire whether the person believe the bible? I reply that a man may assent in general terms to the truth I sent in general terms the truth of the bible we yet denies most of the fundamental doctrines it contains. Those passages that teach them he may say are obscure or wrongly translated or he may explain them away - nay he may say that the bible as a whole is true and yet believe that only a small part of it is inspired. Take the case mentioned in the text. The false teachers among the Galatians did not deny the bible they only perverted it: yet Paul declares them accursed. And surely they were not proper persons to belong to the Church of Christ. So the false teachers mentioned by Peter as bringing in damnable heresies unawares acknowledged no doubt the truth of scripture and professed to take it as their guide. Men often have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. And the object of creed is to detect such and prevent them from leading others to ruin. Creeds indeed have often been productive of mischief because men here have added nonessentials to them - in there is it is well known a strong prejudice against them. But their object is to assist in determining whether in the

view of charity a man is a Christian and although some have the effrontery to declare before God and man that they believe such and such things when they do not yet a man will be more unwilling and unlikely to make such an acknowledgment than he will to make a general confession of this belief in the bible and therefore they tend when they contain no more than the plain fundamentals of the gospel to keep the church pure and do not debase the reception of those whom Christ has received - and who wishes others to belong to the church.

7. I infer from the text that believers are bound to refuse (cannot in conscience admit to) Christian fellowship to those who deny the essential doctrines of the gospel.

By not admitting to Christian Fellowship I mean that the members of the church cannot conscientiously receive such an one to their communion and that the ministers of Christ cannot in faithfulness to their Master invite to a participation and exchange of public services one who denies the essentials of the gospel. And this refusal of fellowship is founded on the plain principle that if it be granted the Christian acknowledges at once that the man maintains no fundamental errors. The moment a man is admitted to the communion of a church - that church acknowledges at once that he is a Christian and consequently that he maintains no error that will destroy the soul. For if one man maintaining opinions fundamentally erroneous be admitted to communion every other man must be and thus the distinction between the church and the world as at once annihilated - that is to say the church is annihilated. And if a minister of Christ exchange pulpit services with anyone that moment he acknowledges that man to maintain all the essentials of religious faith. For by the act of exchange he recommends this man as a teacher to whom they may listen without endangering the salvation of their souls. Thus suppose a minister of Christ exchange pulpit services with one who denies the necessity of a change of heart by the Spirit of God in order to salvation. After this act it would be practically useless for this minister to come before his people and urge the doctrine of regeneration as absolutely essential to salvation: for by the exchange he had acknowledged that one who denied that doctrine maintained no essential errors. And his people therefore would believe or not believe the doctrine just as they pleased or rather they would follow the bent of their inclinations and disbelieve it since their minister had acknowledged that men might deny it and yet go to heaven. And the same reasoning will apply to the doctrine of atonement or any other that is fundamental.

From this brief and imperfect discussion I deduce two or three conclusions.

1. We learn to discriminate between true and specious charity.

True charity requires us to be exclusive when the Bible is - that is to require in a man who seeks admission to church fellowship a belief of all we deem essential in the Gospel while we exercise the largest charity in respect to everything nonessential.

Specious charity makes no distinction between things essential and nonessential and opens its arms to men of every variety of opinion from the bold infidelity of Theodore Parker to the fine points of John Calvin.

2. We see how unreasonable is the wide spread prejudice against creeds.

They are the chief means the church has a defending herself against the inroads of fatal errors...Have been abused...But if they had not been a barrier to error they would not be so hated.

3. We see from the subject that it is an unfavourable symptom to be troubled with doubts about the fundamental principles of the Gospel.

Doubts and difficulties maybe exposed at the beginning of the Christian course but with the mature believer ought to be immoveably established as to all essential truths.

4. How gratifying to know how firm a foundation we have to rest upon when we come into near view of death.

We need then something more than a cunningly devised fable or conjecture which may be true or not.

The foundation of God standeth sure.

Paul knew in whom he had believed.

*[This appears to be the end of this sermon. Eight pages follow this, all of which have been crossed out in pencil and may represent previous versions of the sermon; they are not transcribed and have not been read.]*

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*[Six pages follow, all on gray paper, the pages slightly smaller than the rest; these may represent a separate sermon or an alternative ending for this sermon.]*

In conclusion of this subject I would call upon all who are battling between the opinions no longer to delay making up their minds what are the essential principles of the Gospel and then to maintain them with the firmness and independance manifested by Paul and the other apostles. It is customary I know to regard such decision of character in this matter as a mark of bigotry and uncharitableness and the great effort at this day among the enemies of religion is to turn popular opinion against those who have definite religious opinions and are determined to maintain them by calling them illiberal narrow minded and the like. But I will not therefore shrink from spreading the truth before you. For until you do settle it in your mind what are the essential doctrines of the Bible I have no hope of your conversion or salvation. For it is only by the truth of God that you can be made a new creature and should you be converted and have no settled creed you can do little for the promotion of religion but will be made a mere tool in the hands of the crafty enemies of the truth for condemning the Gospel. It is indeed delightful to repose on the silken couch of unbelief and to listen to the silver trumpet of error praising your liberality and freedom from bigotry and narrow minded intolerance. But forget not I beseech you that solemn declaration which the meek Son of God uttered once in thunder tones. He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned. Depend upon it that this is no idle declaration for the same being who uttered it will be your final judge and it will avail you nothing to plead before him that you could not make up your mind as to the doctrines of the bible that you were sustained in your scepticism by many men of great talents and excellent character who would have denounced your bigotry and liberality as well as ignorance had you adopted and defended the narrow and repulsive doctrines advocated by Paul. In spite of such a plea your judge will reiterate the solemn declaration, *he that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him. The fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

*[Four final pages follow, also on the smaller, gray paper]*

In the secular literature of our day and in some of our religious literature it is common to represent the religion of the bible as an unsettled and uncertain system which differ men of equally good talents and equally sincere will understand differently. The particular religious theories which a man adopts will depend upon his prejudices his education his social position and other circumstances and not at all upon the fact that the Gospel contains one and only one system of doctrine clearly revealed. This uncertainty is not confined to the less important doctrines but characterizes them all. Hence religion cannot depend upon the belief of any particular set of dogmas but lies in the feelings of the heart and may exist with every variety of creed. Indeed there is no reason to suppose that God would confine all true religion to that narrow channel of the Jewish nation and doubtless the true religion of the heart may insist with every sort of belief whether pagan Mohammedan or Christian. It is also great narrowness of views and want of knowledge of the world to suppose that Christianity is the only form of religion that is acceptable and good and still greater bigotry not to acknowledge all in a Christian land who receive the bible as true Christians entitled to our fellowship. To make out a particular set of doctrines as a creed and require others to subscribe to it as a condition of our church membership is the height of narrow mindedness. In this assault upon creeds many Christian men unite and would gladly sweep them from the church and let every man judge for himself whether is entitled to a place at the communion. Indeed no men are regarded with more aversion than those who contend that there is in the bible only one definite set of doctrines that men should be required to believe these before the church should admit his claims to the Christian character.

Such views as these meet us almost every where at the present day and are peculiarly fascinating to the young who naturally hate everything narrow and exclusive and who have not learned that while Christianity exercises the largest charity on all unessential points...

*[Opposite cover]*...is yet more exclusive in demanding a belief of all essential doctrines and a correspondent practice. My object in reading this text this evening is to show how Paul regarded this matter. The passage is too plain to require any exegesis and we may therefore make it the basis of some inferences.

Delivered

At Conway February 1823

At Amherst College August 1832

At Amherst College December 1839

At Amherst College January 1858

At Amherst College July 5 1860

## Sermon 151 Idolatry Part 1

[Sermon No. 151, "Idolatry, Part I" Exodus 20:3, 1823 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 10]

Exodus 20:3

*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

This verse is sometimes read by making me an emphatical word - thus, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* - that is in preference to me. This meaning is undoubtedly comprehended in the verse: but whoever will look into the original Hebrew will perceive that it is not the exact nor the only sense. The words translated *before me* are in other places of scripture rendered in my sight in my presence that is *thou shalt have no other gods in my presence*. Not only shall you not prefer other gods to me, but you shall have no other gods.

In considering this important injunction which you recollect is the first commandment and I shall present before you a history of idolatry - or the worship of idols. And I shall begin with idolatry as it has existed and still exist among the heathen.

A careful examination of the several systems of idol worship that are known to us has led learned men to the conclusion that they all had a common origin. Although they afterwards grew out into various peculiar distortions and much superincumbent matter has been added to each system so as to render it distinct yet the foundation of each system has so much of resemblance that we are forced to refer them all to one original source. The ablest writers riders on this subject suppose Noah and his family and his history to have furnished the groundwork of idolatry. And they suppose that the descendants of Cush who under Nimrod the son of Cush founded the Chaldean empire a few years after the building of the tower of Babel and more than one hundred years after the deluge – these Cushites are supposed to have first introduced idolatry and it is probable that the system they established was the original root out of which have grown all the distorted and abominable idolatries the world has ever witnessed. Whether any of the antediluvians were idolaters in the sense we are now considering the scripture history does not inform us. It is not improbable however that this was among their other sins although such desperate wickedness as then prevailed one would suppose could have its origin in nothing but an atheistical apathy – a total disregard to all religions. But if idolatry did exist previous to the deluge it was rooted out of the earth by that event as those saved in the ark were all righteous. How soon after the flood idolatry was introduced the bible does not exactly inform us. It appears however from the book of Joshua that the ancestors of Abraham were idolaters. *Thus saith the Lord son of God of Israel, said Joshua to the Jews, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time: even Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods.* According to the commonly received chronology Abraham was born 352 years after the flood and as his forefathers were idolaters this will carry us back nearly to the deluge agreeing with the opinion already expressed that the Cushites were the first people who became idolaters.

There is a passage in the fifth chapter of the apocryphal book of Judith referring to the expulsion of Terah and his children out of Chaldea. *This people (the Jews), says Achior, are descended of the*

*Chaldeans. And they sojourned heretofore in Mesopotamia because they would not follow the gods of their fathers which were in the land of Chaldea. For they left the way of their ancestors and worshipped the God of heaven and the God whom they knew. So they cast them out from the face of their Gods and they fled into Mesopotamia and sojourned there many days.* From this account it appears that Terah and his children among whom was Abraham were driven from Chaldea because they would not worship idols. This shows that the great body of the people were idolatrous before that period which was about 400 years after the flood.

As already observed the groundworks of idolatry maybe found in the history of Noah and his family. That tremendous catastrophe by which the earth was covered by a deluge of waters must have left a deep impression on the minds of the survivors and have been handed down by tradition to every succeeding generation. And in after times men would be led to regard the character of their forefather Noah with the greatest reverence as being alone of all the millions of mankind found worthy to be saved from the universal ruin. As the distance in time from the event increased the history of the human mind proves their respect and veneration would increase and the history of the deluge be magnified and it is nothing strange if in the process of years his descendants should be led to regard Noah as more than human and finally to exalt him to the character of God. He would then be regarded as a proper object of worship and when Noah had a divine character thus bestowed upon him it would be natural in a similar manner to deify his sons and all his family. And when once man had admitted the idea of a plurality of gods there would be no limits to their multiplication of these imaginary divinities. The sun moon and stars being conspicuous objects would strongly excite their attention and an active imagination would invest them with intelligence and divinity - and at length these would become objects of worship. Nor would the fancy stop here but every distinguished man would not long after his death be encircled with the attributes of a God and so far was the deification of eminent warriors statesmen and philanthropists carried that in the early periods of Grecian history no less than thirty thousand accounted as divinities.

But imagination would not rest satisfied with exalting to the state and office of gods distinguished men and striking objects of nature. It fancied a presiding divinity over every village every habitation every stream every lake every forest every tree and every individual whether man and animal or plant. For a time perhaps men really thought of the spirit which they fancied to reside in their various objects but soon an effort will be made to represent the god they worshipped to represent to the senses by the construction of images and at length they would imagine the objects themselves or the images to be real gods rather and to all the absurdity of idolatry they added the grossness of materialism. They *changed the glory of the incompatible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and beasts and creeping things.* Indeed every material object in the heavens above and the earth beneath - even the most common tools and instruments of labour the axe the hose the wheel the loom the last the awl, etc., have been in some nations regarded as divinities and worship is even at this day in some parts of the world paid to such senseless deities. Nay more than this the vilest of human passions have been exalted into gods and worship in all heathen lands has been paid to devils! In one nation now existing on earth there are reckoned up no less than 333 millions of divinities who are worshiped! So prolific is idolatry!

That all these monstrous systems of heathenism began with the deification of Noah and his family cannot be doubted by any one who will thoroughly examine the subject will find a multitude of allusions in the symbols and ceremonies and objects of commemoration among them all plainly pointing out Noah and his three sons and the number of his whole family - as also their singular preservation - and the deluge - the ark the dove and the branch of the olive. And although the modern systems of idolatry have superadded to these ten thousand extravagancies yet these original allusions are not entirely



hidden but appear amid the rubbish.

It appears then that polytheism is a monster that multiplies itself ten thousand fold and gathers deformity and odiousness with age. In its youth it is hateful in the view of heavens and in its more advanced stages it is intolerable and abominable.

As to the extent of idolatry in the world it has been awfully great. From the plains of Shinar it spread rapidly to the east and the west the north and the south until Canaan alone remained with the knowledge of the true God. Polished Greece and Rome as well as barbarous Parthia and Africa were full of the gross and polluted worship of imaginary divinities. Satan reigned uncontrolled over these regions of darkness taking to himself that service and worship which was due to God. For wherever idols are worshipped - there in fact Satan is worshipped (under another name). And even in Judea there seems to have been an almost unconquerable disposition to fall away from the worship of one God and adopt the absurdities of the surrounding heathen. And against no other sins are the Jews in the law of God guarded so scrupulously as against idol worship and against no other does God hold forth so aggravated and certain a punishment. Yet still we find from the Jewish history that notwithstanding all these prohibitions that people were almost constantly reverting to idolatry. Witness the construction of the molten calf at the very moment when the glory of the true God sat on the mount before them like a consuming fire. And witness the groves and high places that were so often and so long made the seat of the worship of the gods of the heathen. Even Solomon himself was drawn away by women to the worship of Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and of Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

Not many centuries after Christ idolatry insinuated itself into the Christian church. Images were multiplied in all services and came at length to be worshiped as gods and the whole *world wondered after the beast*. Gentilism and Christianity were mixed together in a most disgusting manner and a degree of consumption followed which rivaled the polluted records of heathenism, and even to this day alas! That same worship binds millions of souls in a Netherdom more horrid than that of the grossest heathenism.

Those parts of the world that are not only in reality but nominally heathen idolaters comprehend a large proportion of it. Out of 800 millions of our race not less than 500 million are pagans sunk in all the depths of idolatry - while not more than 100 millions are even nominally Christians with the exception of the idolatrous Catholics. How powerful is the current that leads men astray from the true God! How is the understanding darkened by the blindness of the heart!

But after all the manner in which heathen worship has been generally performed is the most terrific part of its history. To them almost numberless gods temples were erected and priests were ordained to offer sacrifices upon the altars and shining sacrifices and nations were demanded for each deity and prayers and praises were offered to each. But among all those prayers not one was ever put up for moral good. All were confined to temporal enjoyments while the soul that most needy part of the man was forgotten.

The offerings that were made to these deities gradually became more and more impressive. Originally the victims were not much unlike those under the Jewish dispensation: but they were soon increased in numbers an hundredfold and the costlier the offering the more certain were have the votaries of the blessings they crave. Soon however they proceeded a step farther and nothing would appease these sanguinary divinities but human sacrifices. I could open to your view that temples of the ancient Mexicans and show you the altars streaming every year with the blood of 20,000 human beings. I could

point you to the bloody shrines of the Peruvians and you would see 12,000 infants devoted in a single sacrifice. I could turn your eyes to a Hindustan and you would see the fires of 2000 funeral tires blowing around the dying widow every year – or bid you look on the carcasses of self immolated victims that float down the Ganges - or uncover before you the plains of Juggernaut whitened with the bones of thousands there devoted to appease the fury of an imaginary malignant demon. Or I might point you to the African mothers casting forth their infants to the tigers and the vultures or open before you the stalls of India when youth are fattening for the altar. And we all remember the valley of Hinnom where the Canaanites cast their tender infants into the fire as a sacrifice to Moloch!

No my heroes these are not pictures of the imagination. They are facts as well attested as any fact whatever. They are the genuine fruits of idolatry - the legitimate consequence the just punishment of neglecting the true God and not liking to retain him in their knowledge.

But the loss of a few thousand lives yearly among the heathens is not the worst consequence of their religion even in this life. It debases and pollutes the soul. It gives a license to all manner of iniquity. It opens the floodgates of sin and the deluge of lust, fraud, rapine oppression, deception, cruelty and murder rush over the world in a frightful and resistless inundation. It lets loose superstition and bigotry cruel as the grave to have an iron scepter over the prostrate world and the mind is chained down to all the grossness of matter and becomes incapable of receiving any enlarged enobling abstract ideas. It is made the slave of a wretched priestcraft and submits to the most distressing pilgrimages and panaceas and the foolish hope of thereby seeing the favour of heaven.

Such is idolatry among the heathen. I might swell the picture until your hearts would melt at their condition: but I have already contributed enough for my present purpose. Indeed this part of the subject has occupied so much time that the remainder must be deferred till the afternoon. But before I close permit me to deduce a few inferences from what has been said.

And first infer from the history of heathen idolatry that all knowledge of the true God that ever existed in the world was communicated by revelation.

Philosophers may talk much of discovering the existence and attributes of God in his works. But the truth is none of them ever made any such discovery. Evidences indeed exist overwhelming evidences of the existence and perfection of God in creation so that men are without excuse if they see them not. But history shows us that the religion of man by nature is idolatry. Kings philosophers and sages when a voice is not spoken to them from heaven have all joined in this senseless this debasing worship. The Grecian and Roman philosophers who have delivered some correct sentiments concerning the Deity probably derived the clew to their notions from original revelations through the Jews are the traditions of Egypt.

*The world by wisdom knew not God!* This inspired sentence is engraven on the whole history of man. I read it in every kingdom under heaven where the light of revelation has not shone. I read it in the history of the apostasies of the Israelites themselves - I read it in the sickening history of the Catholic Church. There is a voice from the east – a voice from the west - a voice from the north - and a voice from the south exclaiming *the world by wisdom knew not God*.

2. I infer from the history of heathen idolatry the necessity of divine revelation.

This is the only charm that can break the bands of idolatry asunder - this the only source from which

light can arise upon a benighted world. This the only power that can redeem the soul from the most degrading of all services - the most beastly and abominable of all vices. After a residence of a more than twenty years in Hindustan Mr. Ward declares that he had never seen a single individual who appeared to fear God and work righteousness. Until the bible comes with its purifying and refreshing light man will remain sunk lower much lower than the brutes. This only can unclothe the firm grasp Satan has on the minds of men and let the oppressed free. Civilization, science, literature, philosophy without the bible serves only to varnish over those moral sepulchres which are still full *of dead men's bones and all manner of consumption corruption.*

Blessed be God then that life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. Praised be the God of all mercies that this blessed book has eradicated the sanguinary rites of heathenism from our shores and taught us the existence and worship of the one only living and true God in spirit and in truth.

3. We derive from the history of heathen idolatry overwhelming evidence of the awful depravity of man.

On this subject permit me to quote the eloquent language of a late distinguished writer -

*This subject, says he, perhaps more than any other, holds out to our view a wonderful exhibition of the depravity of the human heart. What sight can be more strange, more humiliating, more debasing, to an intelligent nature, than that of rational and immortal minds, originally virtuous as they came from the hand of God, destined to the possession of endless life, and formed for such noble and sublime purposes, prostrating themselves not only before the sun, and moon, and the host of heaven, but before men, evil spirits, visionary beings, animals, vegetables, blocks of wood, and figures of stone! All these beings, such minds have converted into Deities; and falling down before them, have said unto them, Deliver us: for ye are our gods. Is not beyond measure amazing, to see a human being, a rational, immortal being, go into a forest; cut down a tree; transport it home on a wagon; burn one part of it on his hearth; hew, and carve another part of it into an idol; and call it a God! Is it not amazing, to see such a man confessing himself inferior to a stock, fashioned by his own hands, acknowledging his dependence on it for life, his blessings, and his hopes; placing his trust in it; building to it temples; erecting altars; and offering up to it prayers and praises! Is it not more amazing to behold the same man sacrificing living victims to a mass of wood; rational victims; nay, more, youths of the noblest families, the brightest talents, and the fairest hopes; nay, more still, his own beloved offspring; the children of his own bowels!*

*To complete this dreadful picture of human depravity, the whole Christian world, with few, very few exceptions, was, for many centuries, buried and lost in this stupid, shameful, monstrous worship. The progeny of Noah, who began this unnatural defection from their Creator, became Idolaters, while the waves of the Deluge had hardly ceased to roar around this wasted world. The Jews became Idolaters at the foot of Sinai, beneath the thunders of the Almighty. The Christian world became Idolaters, when the Redeemer was in a sense bleeding on the cross before their eyes. How debased, then, how sinful, how miserable, a being is man! (Dwight)*

[Source: Dwight, 1860]

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At Conway November 1836  
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At Greenfield S. Parish May 1 1836  
At Hadley May 22 1836  
At Hadley Mills May 29 1836  
At Amherst East Parish June 5 1836  
At Hatfield August 1836  
At Northampton January 1837  
At Enfield Mass August 1837  
At Amherst North Parish January 1838  
At Royalston May 1838  
At Amherst South Parish July 1841  
At Bloody Brook September 1843

## Sermon 152 Idolatry Part 2

[Sermon No. 152, "Idolatry, Part II" Exodus 20:3, 1823 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 10]

Exodus 20:3

*Thou shall have no other gods before me.*

*[In the last few paragraphs Hitchcock talks about a deceased parishioner and warns all of the approach of death.]*

In the morning I presented from this text a history of heathen idolatry. And who of us was there that did not feel an abhorrence of the disgraceful and beastly and bloody worship of false gods? Who did not feel as if the existence of idolatry indicted a state of society the most depraved and corrupt and hateful? Who did not shrink from the thought of being an idolater and thank God that he was not of the number?

But is it true my hearers that we are altogether free from this sin and that the text has no application to us? What is idolatry? I made no attempt to explain the term in the morning because everyone knows what it means when applicable to the heathen. But the worship of the pagan divinities is but one variety of idolatry and by no means comprehends the whole of it. Every object upon which men bestow supreme regard or affections is in the strict scriptural sense an idol. Stubbornness is called idolatry by Samuel as is covetousness by Paul and indeed the term is really applicable to all sin. For idolatry consists in preferring anything to God: and sin consists in a preference of ones self to all other beings.

The text then has a most important bearing upon us in a Christian land: nay it applies to the most advanced Christian. For to love desire or expect good from any forbidden indulgence even in the smallest degree is a violation of it. Nay more whatever does not consist with the most perfect love submission and obedience to God is evidently to have some other god in the sight of Jehovah. It is choosing something else in preference to him.

I feel prepared then to assert in the first place that idolatry in Christian lands is exceedingly prevalent.

The ambitious man he idolizes his fame or station or power. He sets up one on the other of these or all of them as the objects before which he bows with reverence and delight. It is not because no other man ever acquired so fame or power or reached so exalted a station: but it is because they are his own. God is infinitely greater and more powerful: yet he does not take as much interest in his greatness as in his own: that is he prefers himself to God. To the promotion of his famed talents to those of every other being. He spends month after month and year after year in the ardent and persevering acquisition of human knowledge sacrificing to this his health the vigour of his days and all the enjoyments of life: while perhaps the glorious attributes of Jehovah awaken within him but little interest and the eternal joys of heaven hold out no charms for him. What heathen devotee is more faithful to his god than such a man is to the divinity he adores!

The accomplished man idolizes his manners. He is more anxious to appear well in the sight of man than

in the sight of God. It would mortify him beyond measure to be guilty of a clownish act before the world but it would bring no blush upon his cheek to be guilty of neglecting that attention to God and his ordinances which God demands. He would notice with more disgust and aversion the breach of a punctilio of politeness than he would a violation of the law of God. He therefore is in idolater.

The person who fancies herself to be beautiful idolizes her form or her face. Suppose for illustration such a person to come into the house of God professedly to engage in his worship. She will be reflecting more upon her appearance in the sight of man than in the sight of God. She will be more anxious in that sacred place to please the eye of man than the eye of God: and be more mortified to fail in attracting the favourable attention of the former than the latter. Is not this setting up an idol even in the sanctuary of Jehovah?

Another person idolizes his dress. His thoughts run more upon it than upon religious objects. He spends more time in preparing and adjusting his dress than he does in preparing his soul for appearing before God and he takes more notice in others of a deficiency in the garments they wear than a deficiency of love to God. What is he but an idolater? And how does he differ in the view of God from the senseless heathen who falls down and worships a block of wood?

The ostentatious man idolizes his equipage. Describe to him the uncreated opinions of the Godhead - tell him of the glories of heaven and of its golden streets and of the golden throne of God and the Lamb and he manifests the most sottistic indifference. But speak to him of his elegant carriage - of his noble houses - of his splendid habitation - describe to him the brilliancy of a ballroom - the saloon and the assembly - and you will strike a string to which every feeling of his soul vibrates. The South Sea Islander (Ostrychean) worships the plume of an ostrich in the head of his chief god - and wherein do these two persons differ in the sight of heaven?

This sensualist idolizes his pleasures. The glutton as the apostle says makes a god of his belly and consecrates more to its service than he does to the living God. The intemperate drunkard makes a god of the intoxicating cup and sacrifices to this without scruple his health his reputation, the comfort of his friends and finally his life. The debaucher pays his adorations and sacrifices heart health and life to the vilest of idols. What is all this my hearers but worshiping devils!

Again very many idolize their friends. The child places more confidence in its parents than in God that he may please them. The wife relies more upon the kindness and protection of her husband than upon the providence of God: and the doting husband worships and serves his wife more faithfully than he does the God in whom he lives and moves. The parent becomes so strongly attached to his child as to forget that God has a better right to it than himself. He wishes to monopolize it to himself. He fancies great comfort will be derived from it in future years and looks forward perhaps to the period of old age when it will be the staff on which he can lean. In a word he loves the child better than he loves God and places his dependance there more than upon God. But says Christ, *he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* He has chosen his object of worship and God will not have a rival. He demands the supreme affections of the heart or he will have none. And therefore when we thus transfer the affections due to God to a mere gift of God it is a gross idolatry and no wonder God often takes from us the idol in which we trusted that we may be led to fix our affections on him. And woe be to us if such be not the effect.

Finally the Christian sometimes idolizes his attainments in religion. He fancies that he possesses certain gifts about his fellow Christians and he feels proud of them as if by the strength of his arm he had done

it or by his wisdom. To this fancied superiority he transfers his worship imagining all the while that he is serving God and striving to promote his glory when in fact he is only feeding spiritual pride. This is one of the deepest and most successful delusions of Satan.

And now my hearers who of us is free from all these various idolatrous practices? Who is there in Christian lands that is free? The real believer indeed does not habitually and knowingly indulge does not knowingly indulge himself in preferring the creature to the Creator. But still he feels an occasional inordinate attachments to forbidden objects and thus constitutes idolatry - this is having other gods in the presence of Jehovah. And the impenitent man is uniformly and habitually and voluntarily an idolater.

In the second place I remark that idolatry in Christian lands incurs peculiarly aggravated guilt.

The heathen have their ignorance - their early education and universal example to plead in behalf of their worship of false gods. And there certainly are in the view of man mitigating circumstances but you and I my hearers have nothing to plead in extenuation of our idolatry. We have line upon line and precept here a little there a little so clear that we cannot mistake the meaning and so reasonable that we cannot gainsay it, urging us by a thousand motives to give our supreme affections to God. We have the holy Scriptures opened before us in which the most tremendous repeated threatenings and punishments against every species of worldly mindedness (worldliness) stare us full in the face. We are early instructed to love God supremely and to subordinate every desire and every affection to his will and although we see multitudes serving Mammon still here and there are examples before us of steady faithful devotedness to God - sufficiently numerous indeed to take away every shadow of excuse for our idolatry on the score of example. In short if we do prefer the creature to the Creator after all the light that shines upon us the doom that awaits us will be unspeakably awful. For the punishment of sinners in another world will be in direct proportion to the degree of light they have resisted here. Jesus said unto them, *if ye were blind ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see: therefore your sin remaineth. To whom much is given of much will be required. Woe unto thee Chorazin! Woe unto thee Bethsaida! For is 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.*

*[Several lines are crossed out here in pen.]*

In the third place I assert that many in Christian lands sacrifice more to the false gods they worship than the heathen do to their divinities.

Do the heathen endure long penances as an act of devotion - practicing the most patient self - denial? What penance what self - denial can be greater than those exercised by the avaricious man to acquire property? Do the heathen submit to the most degrading services to please their divinities? Where among them can be found any that are more beastly and polluting than the deeds of the glutton the drunkard or the adulterer? Do the heathen sacrifice their comfort their prosperity their health and even life to appease the vengeance of their gods? So does the ambitious man - so does the sensualist.

In all sacrifices of a worldly nature then heathen idolaters and Christian idolaters are on a level. Wherein then do they differ? I mean not here to discuss the future condition of the heathen: but it is certain that the heathen have no idea that their worship of idols will ruin their souls forever and involve them in eternal woe. And therefore they cannot be said to have voluntarily sacrificed their immortal interest to the idols. But the man who in a Gospel land is an idolater - the man who loves this world in any of its

forms more than he loves God, does knowingly and deliberately and voluntarily sacrifice his never dying soul to the God he worships. He is told every Sabbath he is told every day – the bible tells him - the ministers of Christ tell him - conscience tells him - the spirit of God tells him that if he love the world supremely he loses forever loses his soul. He knows certainly that ruin awaits him that he is risking on the thick bosses of the buckles of Almighty God, that God is angry with him every day and will ere long cast him into a wine press to be trodden down by His fierceness and wrath. Yet he does offer all this immense sacrifice upon the altar of his Moloch! Tell us no more of the cruelties of the heathen - tell us no more all the fires of the funeral pile – of the car of Juggernaut – of the bloody Ganges - of the cruel mothers casting forth their infants to appease the fury of their imaginary deities. Here is a cruelty before which theirs softens into mercy. Here is a sacrifice cleaner than all the wealth of India – of more value than this whole world - of more value than this whole universe - the sacrifice of an immortal soul. Disappear all other instances of infatuation: here is a madness which makes every thing else sober reason.

And where are those to be found who are thus sacrificing to idols all that is precious in another world? They meet us in every street - they come with us to the house of God - they dwell in our own neighborhood - they are members of our families – they are our fathers or our mothers our wives or our husbands our children our companions and neighbors. They are those who are to us the dearest objects on earth bound to us by all the ties of material and acquired affection. Yet they are living without God and without hope. They are worshiping idols and therefore sacrificing their souls. And it might be too that we are ourselves among the infatuated number. Perhaps we too are idolaters in such a sense that we are the enemies of God.

And is there no argument that is powerful enough to break the fatal chain. Cannot the voice of God be heard amid our fatal delusions? Will we close our ears to the warnings of that Being whose thunders will ere long make the earth reel and stagger and hell herself shake her lowest foundations. That Being has said that no man can serve two masters - that we cannot serve God and Mammon – that the friendship of the world is enmity with God - that if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. But how often has every Christian - how often has every sinner read these most solemn and alarming declarations and yet gone forth unawakened to the service of idols? How often have we all with these words and the words of the text sounding in our ears turned immediately to the pursuit of the riches honors or pleasures of the world crying out to them by our practice (the loudest of all language), *these be our gods!* And if these declarations of Almighty God have been so often disregarded by us they will probably be disregarded by us to day.

But my hearers the providence of God has put into my hands today a new and unexpected argument to persuade you to abandon the worship of idols. Death has come among us to assist to day in pleading the cause of God. From yonder coffin there comes a voice to tell us the vanity of the world: to show us that there is nothing on earth worthy our supreme regard - I hear that voice and he that hath an ear let him hear what the dead says to the living crying out - *cursed is the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the Lord. Vanity of vanities all is vanity.* He whose mortal remains are before us had lived long enough to try the world in its earliest and its latest periods - in childhood and old age. He knew it is prosperity and adversity. And when at last he came to the closing scene what testimony did he bear to the worth of the world? Did he find its riches honors or pleasures to be the solace and support of a dying hour? No: it was Jesus after whom he panted. It was Jesus who was then precious to his soul. It was Jesus on whom we trust he learned. None but Jesus - none but Jesus was his language and his feelings in his dying moments. Every idol which we are now pursuing so fondly and eagerly appeared to him then to be vanity and the lie.



And to this same state in which we see our friend - to the coffin - to the grave we are all rapidly advancing. Approach then his coffin ye who are gray-headed and are worshipping some worldly idol. Approach and tremble at the end which awaits you if have no Jesus on whom to lean in a dying hour. Approach ye afflicted mourners! And as you gaze at your lifeless friend solemnly ask yourselves whether you love any thing better than you love Christ. And should you find yourselves clinging to some idol let this day see you bursting away from its worship and forsaking everything for Christ. Let Christ reign supreme in your affections that you may reign with him in glory. Approach ye whose souls are bound up in pursuit of wealth - and as you there see the end of all flesh remember that, *as you brought nothing into the world so it is certain you can carry nothing out of it*. Approach ye who are seeking the praise of men more than the praise of God and say when you come to lie like this our friend cold in the coffin of what avail to you though your names be sounded all over the earth? Of what avail if Jesus be not your friend. Approach ye who are pursuing forbidden pleasures thou glutton - thou drunkard - thou adulterer - thou bacchanalian - approach and remember that death stands ready to cut you down also: and that hell is waiting to receive you except you abandon your polluted and debasing idols.

Oh my hearers what strange what inconsistent beings we are! We acknowledge that the world is a delusive phantom – an idle dream - and yet we hug it to our bosoms as if it were our supreme God. We confess that riches are unsatisfying and incapable of yielding any permanent enjoyment, and yet we are as eager after them as if nothing were preferable. We confess the praise of men to be a mere puff of air and yet we strive for it more earnestly than we strive for heaven - and cast away our souls rather than fail of possessing it. We agree that worldly pleasures in the end bit like a serpent and sting like an adder yet we pursue after them with unceasing greediness. We acknowledge that God is worthy to be loved and served supremely: and yet we worship idols. We love the creature more than the Creator. We are certain that death is not far distant from any one of us: and we know that every thing earthly will then be no better to lean upon than a spiders web: yet we live as if the world were every thing and religion nothing. When O when will these inconsistencies cease? When shall we resolve to have no other gods but the living and true God? May the Spirit of God by his constraining and irresistible influences tear away our affections from every false god from this false world. For if we strive any longer to serve God and Mammon God will forever abandon us and we shall call on Mammon in vain to save us from the wrath that is to come.

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At Hadley Mills May 29 1836

At Amherst June 5 1836

At Hatfield August 1836

At Northampton January 1837

## Sermon 153 Consideration

[Sermon No. 153, "Consideration," Psalm 4:2, 1823 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 11]

Psalms 4:2

*Selah.*

To deduce a sermon from a passage of scripture which to most readers does not seem to contain any important truth is not generally a commendable practice. Such passages however make a deeper impression on the memory than others and as we are greatly helped in our recollection by association if the text of a discourse be suggested to our memory we shall be apt to remember something of the discourse. On this account such texts if they really contain any important doctrine or precept are valuable although to use them continually would make them cease to be uncommon or striking.

The word which I have chosen at this time for a text is one about the meaning of which several opinions have been expressed. It is found 77 times in the bible - 74 of which occur in the Psalms and then in Habakkuk. One of the most probable of these opinions is that the word signified a pause or rest in singing - or a pause in the sense. We find it however most commonly put at the conclusion of an important or striking sentence and hence some have inferred that it was intended to quicken the attention of the singer or hearer to what had just been said. There is at least a probability that this might have been one of the uses of the word. And in this sense I shall regard it at this time. I shall suppose the word to be a mark by which the reader is called upon to praise and look back upon what he has read and attentively consider its truth and importance. And I shall not apply it to any particular passage but consider it as written at the close of the whole bible - at the close of every chapter at the close of every verse. For in fact reason conscience and God's spirit have written *Selah* in this sense on every sentence of this sacred book. And it is the neglect of this word - it is a want of consideration that prevents so many in a gospel land from believing and embracing it. We all read the holy scriptures: but worldly care worldly temptations - violent or corrupt passions and strong prejudices prevent our pausing at the conclusion and solemnly enquiring what we have read and how it applies to us. My object in this discourse is to urge all my hearers notwithstanding And others and as we are greatly helped in our recollections by association notwithstanding these obstructions to pause at the conclusion of every chapter and verse of the bible they read them seriously and candidly reflect upon it.

In the first place I urge every reader of the bible to pause and consider that this book carries with it a divine authority.

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God. Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* What they spoke therefore and committed to writing is to be regarded in a very different light from the language of uninspired men. When we read a human composition we may believe or disbelieve adopt or reject the sentiments it contains with impunity so far as authority is concerned. But the bible carries with it a divine authority. The seal of God who cannot lie is set to it. Thus saith the Lord is prefixed to every doctrine and every precept it contains and this warrant gives them a claim to our acceptance that can be possessed by no other writing. It is not our option to receive or reject believe or disbelieve as we shall please. We are bound implicitly to believe every truth that sacred book contains and to practice

every duty it enjoins. When for instance God says, *My Son give me thy heart*, to refuse compliance is to resist the express will of God - it is to erect a standard of rebellion against omnipotence - it is to stand forth in the view of the universe an obstinate enemy of God. Christ has commanded all men in a Christian land to confess him before the world and to sit down at his table. To neglect a compliance with this command is to oppose our wills to his - it is to declare by our conduct before angels and men that in our particular case this command is unjust or improper it is voluntarily to expose ourselves to the execution of the sentence pronounced upon such that they shall be denied in the presence of God and angels in a future world. God has required of us *whether we eat or drink or whatever we do to do all to his glory*. And if we do not comply - if we seek our own glory instead of his we cut ourselves off from all hope of acceptance with him. We incur and that voluntarily all the threatenings the bible contains.

And the bible comes to us with a claim to our belief not only in the grand essentials of the religion it contains but in everything it contains. It is all the word of God and therefore one part of it is as true as another. There is no one doctrine. There is no one precept in that book which may be knowingly and deliberately disbelieved or set aside. We may not all understand every minor point alike: but in the sense we do understand them we must believe them. Christians for instance are commanded not to jest with one another - and whoever regards this as an unnecessary precept and willfully neglect it sets at nought the authority and calls in question the wisdom and offers insult to the majesty of the eternal and Almighty God. After we have once acknowledged that the bible is revelation it is no excuse for us to say that such or such a thing in it appears unreasonable inconsistent unnecessary or unimportant. For we ought to remember that the foolishness of God is wiser than men and that when we call in question the truth of anything contained in the bible we call into question in fact the veracity and wisdom of God.

It is greatly to be feared that this irreverence for the bible is too common even with many who profess to believe it. It is too often looked upon with that same kind of jealousy and curious criticism with which many human productions are viewed. It is an age in which men are solicitors to learn the reason of every doctrine and precept and whatever does carry with it the evidences of a moral demonstration meets with but a poor reception. This inquisitive spirit is in general commendable: but there is great danger lest it lead men to forget the reverence they owe the scriptures and cause them to view the bible as a work of man and not the work of God. But surely we ought to be extremely cautious that we do not forget this - since if our sense of its authority be lessened proportionally reduced will be our confidence in it and our submission to it. You listen with much more deference to the opinion of a learned man than an ignorant man. You would regard that man censorable who did not pay a still higher deference to the opinion of an angel or an archangel - and when God speaks therefore his words ought to command our most unreserved and hearty and reverential acceptance. To treat with disrespect the writings of a learned and candid man is a proof of great self-sufficiency and folly - to regard with like intemperance with the like irreverence the words of an angel would be the height of folly - but to have no peculiar respect for the word of God is infatuation is downright madness.

In the second place I would urge every reader of the bible to pause and reflect that this book contains the terms and the only terms of his salvation.

The language of that book is *There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus. He that believeth shall be saved he that believeth not shall be damned*. The bible proceeds on the idea that men are all rebels against heaven - that all have revolted from the authority of God - that all stand by nature in the attitude of enemies lifting up the standard of defiance against heaven. It concludes us all under sin and declares that we are by nature the children of wrath even as others. We are told that God in Christ (came into the world) is reconciling the world as a

Mediator unto himself to reconcile us to God. Now there is no such thing as a reconciliation where there is no enmity. And in the Scriptures are contained the terms definitely stated on which we can make our peace with God. There is no obscurity resting on these terms. Who can mistake for instance the meaning of this article of the terms - *except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish - God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.* Or this article, *except a man enter be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.* Or this article, *he that believeth it hath everlasting life: but he that believeth not shall never see life but the wrath of God abideth on him.* Or this article, *he that denieth me before man him will I also deny before my Father and before his angels* or this article *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

All these articles are so plain that they are not to be misunderstood. And let the man who reads the bible pause and remember that they are the only terms on which he can enter heaven. *God is not man that he should be neither the Son of Man that he should repent. Heaven and earth shall pass away but one jot one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled. The grass withereth the flower fadeth but the word of our God shall stand forever.* Never will the requirements of God be lowered one iota. His terms of salvation are the most reasonable that could in consistency with his perfections be proposed and not all the powers of the earth still can procure the least alteration of them. Man must submit to them unreservedly or he must perish without remedy. The alternative is before every one of us and it will avail us nothing to close our eyes and neglect to enquire and understand what are the terms of salvation. It will avail us nothing to fancy ourselves secure by casting ourselves without complying with these terms upon the mercy of God. The truth is God has put his word into our hands containing the terms of salvation and the moment we read them sincerely and attentively as we are bound to do we cannot fail to understand them - and if we refuse compliance there is no mercy for us. Not a single ray of mercy will ever beam on an individual of our race only through the merits of Jesus Christ. To presume upon God's mercy therefore before we have submitted our hearts to the Saviour is like blindfolding our eyes and rushing down a precipice. The language of all such is *no man cometh to the Father but by Christ - whosoever denieth the Son the same hath not the Father. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Christ Jesus. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema - maran atha.*

3. I urge the man who reads the bible to pause and consider that he has but a short time to determine whether he will accept or reject the terms of reconciliation to God which that book proposes.

*Our days on earth are but as a shadow. We spend our years as a tale that is told.* Every year appears to us shorter than the last and ere we are aware of it the whole of our pilgrimage will be completed. The passing day the passing hour the passing moment is all we can call our own. Yet in this space so short at longest so precarious at best we must decide whether we will live forever in heaven or in hell. This is the only period given us to accept or reject the terms of salvation God has proposed to us. In the grave whither we are all hastening there is no work nor device nor wisdom. We may fancy that many years are before us and that we may neglect to become Christians now until a future day: but this will not prevent God from swearing in his wrath that we shall never enter into his rest. We may prefer to attend to our worldly concerns a little longer and then when we have finished such or such enterprise we may hope to attend to our souls. But this will not prevent God if it be his will from calling us out of the world before that time comes. We may indulge ourselves in vague doubts about the terms of salvation: and live on year to year feeding upon these doubts: but this will not prevent the time of our probation running out - it will not persuade God to lengthen out a single moment the terms which he has given us to decide whether we will submit to Christ.

If you were in a besieged fortress and were driven to the last extremity and the conqueror were to offer you certain terms on which your lives might be spared - and give a certain number of hours in which to decide whether you would choose life or death - you would not trifle away those hours in attending to other things. You would be reading over again and again the terms sent to you and deliberating whether you could comply. But we are all in a besieged world - a world which has been fighting against God - and we are reduced to the greatest extremity. God has sent us the terms on which we can escape not temporal but eternal death and inherit not merely a temporal but eternal joys - and he demands a speedy decision from us. Death is commissioned to press us to a decision without any delay. Yes my hearers if we do not decide soon death will decide for us. The man who is crying for a little more sleep a little more slumber will soon find it impossible to sleep - for death will awaken his soul to endure eternal agony. The man who pleads a pressure of worldly cares as an excuse for neglecting religion will soon be relieved of that exercise by the hand of death removing him out of the world and then he will have time enough for reflection. Eternity will be before him and he will be reflecting about religion through all its countless ages - but it will be only to deplore that it can never be his. One man is doubting about the reality of vital religion but his doubts will soon long before he expects it be all removed by the realities of eternity. Another man is in doubt whether it is his duty to make a public profession of religion: but let him delay a little longer and death will decide the question for him. Another man doubts what denomination he ought to join and so neglects joining any - but his doubts will all be removed speedily when he lies upon the bed of death. Another man doubts whether he is under any obligation to love God tells till his grace be given to convert him: but he will not have one doubt on the subject when he lies upon a dying bed and sees himself about to enter eternity unconverted.

4. I urge every man who reads the bible to pause and consider that for every chapter for every verse of that blessed book he is soon to give an account at the bar of God.

He will there be called upon to answer whether he has believed what the bible contains and whether he has practiced what it commands. When we read human production we know there is no tribunal earthly or heavenly before which we shall be called upon to render an account of our belief or disbelief improvement or misimprovement if what it contains: and we accordingly have no sense of our accountability. And it is to be feared that too many of us read the bible with as little sense of the account we are to give of it to God. But let every man who reads a verse or chapter of the bible remember that that is not the last of it - that there is a day coming in which that verse and chapter will be reviewed. He may forget the precept or doctrine contained in the passage but God will never forget it. *Why sayest thou O Jacob and speaketh O Israel my way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding.* At the day of judgment we shall all find that though we may have forgotten the scriptures God will not have forgotten them. And he will demand of us the cause of our neglect of his word if we have neglected it. *Bring forth your strong reasons* will be the demand of the Judge in that awful day - the reason why when you were commanded to make *you a new heart* you did not comply - the reasons why when the bible commanded you to repent he did not do it - the reason why you put off a preparation for death so many years when the bible told you that *now is the accepted time - now is the day of salvation* - the reason why you neglected prayer when the bible directed you to pray without ceasing - the reason why you set your affections on the world when the bible commanded you *to love not the world neither the things that are in the world* - in find the reason for every neglect of any of the precepts of the Scriptures. And have we any reasons we shall dare offer before God - any reasons that will not make us blush - any reasons that will exterminate our? O my hearers every month will then be stopped and we shall not dare to raise one murmur against the justice of God although we feel his

condemning sentence piercing through us like a two-edged sword.

In viewing the subject that has been presented before you this morning my hearers I cannot but remark that we here discover the reason why so many neglect to comply with the precepts and disbelieve the doctrines of the bible. It is because they are forgetful of the word *Selah* that is they do not pause to consider the consequences of disregarding and neglecting the bible. The man who is living on in an unconverted state could not rest easy a moment were to look steadily and calmly and seriously at his condition. The prayerless man would be brought upon his knees were he to stop in his worldly concern and enquire what would be the end of it. Could the thief - the liar - the profane swearer - the drunkard - the fornicator - the adulterer - the fraudulent - the slanderer - only look for a moment into hell and then remember that he doomed to that horrid world by the unalterable decree of God except he repent he would flee from his evil ways and escape for his life from the strong punishment that awaits him. But Satan contrives to prevent men from deliberating in the consequences of their conduct. He always has some bait ready to attract their attention away from themselves and thus are they prevented from being brought under conviction and alarm.

But let men only take *Selah* for their motto and the bible would appear a very different book and they could not go deliberately from reading its laws to a violation of them. Let a man only firmly in his mind the simple yet appalling fact that concerning his improvement of every chapter and every verse he is to pass a sentencing at the bar of God and it would serve as a chance to restrain him from the commission of known sin - and it would be a powerful stimulus to spur him forward to keep the commandments and submit himself to God. Let the scoffer only carry about with him the single word *Selah* and his tongue would be silent. Let the unregenerate youth who is impetuously borne along by the current of his passions despite of the counsel of friends and the warnings of the bible only treasure up this word in his memory and he would find himself stopped in his career. Let the profane hearer only utter this word and the oath would vanish from his lips. Let the liar listen to the sound of it and his utterance of falsehood would be choked. Let the intemperate man write the word upon the intoxicating bowl and his arm would be palsied and unable to life it to his mouth. Let the Sabbath breaker repeat this word in the morning and he will go to the house of God an anxious hearer. Let the fornicator or adulterer the abandoned hypocritical rotten seducer read only this word in the bible and apply it and his soul would fever with horror and his knees would smite together with fear like those of Belshazzar. Let the worldly minded man carry this word about unto him and it would throw a sickening hue over those pursuits that were so charming before.

My hearers the word *Selah* in the sense in which I have now exhibited it is written upon the gates of hell. These men will pause and reflect upon their conduct in the afterlife. They may pass through this world without reflecting seriously and solemnly upon the state of their souls: but the moment they are cast into a lake of fire and brimstone busy memory will look back to this world and conscience will reproach them for slighting the offers of salvation for slighting the offers of salvation for praising a phantom and neglecting solid good - a consideration upon the past upon the misspent hours will be the worm that will never die. Remember therefore sinner that if you will not pause in your mad cares in this world and reflect upon the consequences of your present course remember that an eternity of agonizing reflection awaits you. *The anger of the Lord shall not return until he have executed and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.*

Delivered

At Conway March 1823

At Greenfield South Parish August 1823

At Muddy Brook May 1824

At Amherst College October 1827

At Amherst College June 1833

At Amherst College October 1841

At School Meadow December 1828

At Amherst East Parish March 1836

At Sunderland June 12 1836

At Pelham August 1840

At Amherst S. Parish December 1840

At Leverett June 1843

At Whately June 1843

At Amherst North Parish January 1844

## Sermon 155 Divine Teaching Necessary to Induce Men to Receive Christ in His True Character.

[Sermon No. 155, "Divine Teaching Necessary to Induce Men to Receive Christ in His True Character,"  
Matthew 16:17, 1823 Mar, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 11]

Matthew 16:17

*And Jesus answered and said unto him blessed art thou Simon Barjona:  
for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

*[This sermon deals with the apparent contradiction of Jesus the man and Jesus as God; also how Christians reconcile apparent contradictions in the Bible – they should simply accept it as beyond their understanding.]*

The words Christ and Messiah have the same meaning. The former is a Greek and the latter A Hebrew word - and means simply one who is anointed for some special office. Thus all the kings of Judah and Israel were anointed before entering upon their kingly office and they are frequently in the original languages styled Christ or Messiah. And the title is given by way of eminence to that distinguished personage who was anointed of God for the high and holy office of Mediator to a lost and rebellious world.

It is of considerable importance to keep these meanings of the terms in the memory when reading the Scriptures - as the force of several passages rests altogether on this meaning. Thus in Acts Paul said to the Thessalonians *This Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ* – that is Jesus was the anointed of God – the Jewish Messiah. But a man who knows not the original meaning of the word Christ can attach no meaning whatever to such passages. It is a very general opinion that Christ was the surname of Jesus the son of Joseph and Mary. But it is not except in a very few instances. It is merely a title of office and has no more to do with the original name than any civil or military or religious title in these days has with a man's name.

At the time of our Saviour's appearance on earth the Jews were anxiously expecting the coming of the Messiah or the Christ. But the condition in which Jesus manifested himself struck blow at once to all their fond hopes of temporal deliverance and aggrandizement from his exertions. And it was a long time before Jesus declared himself openly to be the expected Messiah. He wrought miracles before their eyes of the most unquestionable character - and these were proof enough of his divine origin. But they were repelled by the prejudices of the worldly minded Jews: *as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*. It was not indeed till after a considerable time that Jesus thought proper to disclose his true character to his disciples. So tainted were they also with Jewish prejudices and expectations that they could not bear the complete development. At a period of his ministry somewhat advanced Christ put the question directly to his disciples - *whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptizer; some Elijah; and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets? He saith unto them but who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*. As none of the disciples dissented from this prompt reply we may conclude they all coincided in this correct opinion of Peter. Nay only a short time before when Jesus stilled the boisterous



sea they came and worshiped him *saying of a truth thou art the Son of God*. By the miracles he had wrought they had been at last convinced what his true character was.

Yet it seems from the reply of Christ to Peter when he made the frank confession *thou art the Christ the Son of the living God* that it had required something more than his miracles to bring him to such a belief cordially. *Flesh and blood hath not revealed unto thee but my Father which is in heaven*. Multitudes besides had witnessed the same miracles and yet did not acknowledge their author to be *the Messiah the Son of the living God*. It needed a divine influence upon the heart in order to subdue their prejudices and their pride before these miracles could have the effect of producing a cordial belief in the true character of the Saviour. And the reason why Peter was brought into that belief was that this influence had been sent into his heart and *opened his understanding to understand the Scriptures* and led him to a saving reception and acknowledgment of the Saviour. For a saving belief it seems to have been – not merely a speculative confession of Christ's character but *with the heart he believed unto righteousness and with the mouth he made confessions unto salvation*. *Blessed art thou* says Christ to Simon and the reason assigned for his blessedness was that his father in heaven had revealed this truth to him. But had it been a mere speculative belief he would not have been uninterested in the merits of the Saviour and therefore not blessed.

There seems to have been nothing in the case of Peter that rendered divine influences peculiarly necessary more than there is in the case of all men in a Gospel land. Nay if the light of evidence be alone sufficient to bring any man to a cordial and saving acknowledgment of the true character of Christ it would seem no man could enjoy a brighter light than Peter. He not only saw the miracles of Christ but was with him constantly as an intimate friend and could ask him directly concerning his true character. If then he needed after all divine influences to enable him cordially to believe in Christ where is the individual to be found especially in these latter days who does not need a like influence? We may then consider the text as implying the following proposition.

Men do not cordially and savingly receive Christ in his true character until they are taught by the special influences of the Spirit.

The truth of this proposition will further appear by considering the difficulties men find.

1. In the metaphysical character of Christ
2. In his Priestly character.

But before mentioning these difficulties permit me to refer to a few passages of Scripture that are parallel with the text.

*No man knoweth the Son, says Christ, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him*. In order then that any man should have any true knowledge of God it is necessary that Christ should reveal to him the character of God – and Christ represents his own character as equally incomprehensible because alike infinite and therefore needing a like revelation from God in order to be cordially believed in.

*No man can come unto me, says Christ, except the Father draw him*. To come to Christ certainly implies among other things to believe in him: and this Christ here describes as the effect of influence from God. In the next verse Christ says, *It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me*.

In accordance with these representations of the Saviour Paul says, *When it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the heathens* is evidently referring his own belief in Christ to an influence from God.

Paul also says to the Corinthians *no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost*. He does not mean that nobody can speak these words without a divine influence: but no man can express a saving cordial belief in the character of Christ and in his doctrines unless it be through the influence of the Holy Ghost. This do we find that the text is not a solitary instance of a declaration of the doctrine that men do not savingly receive Christ in his true character until they are taught by the special influences of the Spirit. It is a doctrine that seems common to the New Testament writers and to a further elucidation and proof of it I now invite your attention while I consider

First, the difficulties men find in the metaphysical character of Christ.

By his metaphysical character I mean those powers and faculties or attributes which the Scriptures describe him as possessing. And every person who reads the bible finds two classes of text which describe this character. Let us look at some of the plainest of these.

On opening the N. Testament at the beginning of John's Gospel we read, *in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God*. Yet in the same chapter the word is said to have been made flesh and to have dwelt among us and in subsequent chapters this word is described as a man going about doing good healing the sick raising the dead - eating drinking conversing weeping rejoicing - in fine exhibiting the faculties and affections the feelings and desires of a man.

In Paul's writings in speaking of the Jews he says *of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came who is over all God bless forever*. Yet the same Apostle in other parts of his epistle says, *there is one God and one Mediator the man Christ Jesus* and he says God hath appointed a day in which he *will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained*. And if we turn to Matthew Mark and Luke we find that this same Christ was a helpless infant lying in a manger that he increased in stature and wisdom and was subject to his parents and to the Roman government.

Now there can be nothing clearer than these two classes of text. The language is exceedingly plain and intelligible – and it certainly conveys to every candid mind the idea that in one place Christ is called God without any qualification and in another place that he is called man without any qualification. And this very great difference in the description of his character is not confined to a few texts: but it extends through the whole bible wherever his character is made a theme of discussion. The mere names of God and man as applied to him constitute but a small part of the peculiar phraseology. In all the descriptions the sacred writers give of his personal character there is found a similar diversity in their language. In our place it is said that *all things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made. By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are on earth visible and invisible whether they be thrones or dominions principalities or powers all things were made by him and for him and he is before all things and by him all things consist*. In another place it is said that he *had not where to lay his head* - that he was subject to the Roman government and to his parents that he was dependant on the bounty of his disciples and others for support. In one place all the angels of God are commanded to worship him and all the hosts of heaven are represented as ascribing blessing and honor and glory and power not only unto him that sitteth on the throne but also to the Lamb forever and ever. In another place he is said to have been despised and rejected of men to have been hated and

persecuted and finally to have been taken and bound by Roman soldiers insulted buffeted and spit upon and finally crucified. In one place he is said to be the same yesterday to day and forever - the Alpha and Omega the first and the last - in another place he is said to have been born in the reign of Herod and after living a little more than thirty years to have died. In one place he is said to be that Being who searches the reins and hearts - in another he is represented as ignorant of the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. In one place he is said to have been tried judged and condemned at Pilate's bar: in another to be the final Judge of quick and dead.

These unspeakably different descriptions of Christ's character must strike every man who reads the bible. And now the question is what judgment men will pass upon them without any other guide than unassisted reason.

The first enquiry that will be apt to arise in the mind of such a person is whether this great diversity in the descriptions of Christ's character does not prove the bible to be false. Here we will say is a flat contradiction presented to us - being is described as God and at the same time man. And since God is a true God he never can have revealed such a contradiction: hence in the bible cannot be inspired.

This would be correct reasoning were it true that the bible description of Christ's character involves a contradiction. But on such a subject we should be very certain of the fact before we pronounce that it does for we are here reasoning about what is plainly a matter of revelation and therefore we are very liable to be led into mistakes. Yet there have been some who felt so certain that such a contradiction does exist in the bible that they have on this ground denied the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Others however adopt a different conclusion. In the scriptural account of Christ's character they think they perceive two classes of texts that are utterly irreconcilable - the one representing Christ to be God and the other describing him as a man. But they shrink from the idea of disavowing the truth of the Scriptures on this account. What then can be done? The conclusion is that since God cannot be the author of contradictions they do not understand one of these classes of text - or that they are wrongly translated or that they have been added to the sacred text since the days of Christ. But which class shall they thus reject. Those that represent Christ as God are those denominating him a man. The former they reject because to suppose that he is God implies the absurdity that God himself has come into the world and suffered and died and it implies also that there are two gods. For if Christ be God and the Father be God they cannot be one being but must be two distinct beings.

Reasoning in this manner many are led to regard all those texts in scripture which expressly or impliedly declare Christ to be God as not being capable of being understood or not in fact a part of the word of God: and accordingly these texts are to such a dead letter. They make no more use of them than if they were not in the bible. But it is declared in the bible that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine for reproof for correction for instruction in righteousness*. Hence we perceive the necessity of divine teachings in order to prevent them giving up a part of the bible as of no consequence and in order to induce men to submit to receive God has spoken although they may not understand it all. By these divine teachings I do not mean that God communicates any new revelation: but only enables man to understand and receive that revelation he has already communicated. Neither do I mean that this influence is exerted so that men are sensible of it at the time and can say now we are or are not under the teachings of the Spirit: but it is exerted through the medium of the faculties in such a manner that a man cannot distinguish it from the workings of his own mind. He finds his mind turned in a particular direction and his heart yielding up its stubbornness and opposition but he perceives nothing in all this that is miraculous - nothing that may not be accounted for from the free use of his faculties -

although when he compares his present with his former feelings he perceives so wide a difference that he can impute it only to the grace of God.

The man who is thus taught of God comes to the bible with a sincere humble desire to know and embrace everything he finds there clearly revealed. He feels as if it were safer to trust to what God has said than in his own reasonings. He is as willing to be taught out of this book of God as the child is to be taught by its parents. In regard to the metaphysical character of Christ he finds the two classes of text already mentioned and the enquiry arises how he shall understand? He would adopt that class which declare Christ to be God and neglect those which declare him to be man were he not fearful that by thus doing he should be guilty of taking away from the words of the prophecy of that book. Or he would receive that class of texts which represent Christ as man and reject those which call him God could he be satisfied that they are not a part of God's word or have been added by man or are wrongly translated. But upon finding that there is as much reason for supposing any other part of Scripture to be spurious or incorrectly rendered his heart refuses to reject them. What then can he do? He will say - I will believe both classes of these texts - that is I will believe Christ to be both God and man because I find these two characters ascribed to him in the bible and the bible is an infallible guide. And to say that such a belief implies a contradiction is more than I dare say; because I cannot comprehend the mode of the divine existence and I am willing to believe concerning this subject whatever I find plainly revealed in the unerring word of God.

Secondly Let us consider some of the difficulties men find in the pride priestly character of Christ.

By this term I mean his character as Mediator between God and man in which he made an atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind by offering up himself for us and by his blood making satisfaction to the offended law of God. And in this part of his character men find great difficulties. As it was in the days of Paul so it has been in every age that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish either a stumbling block or foolishness. It is a mode of saving sinners that is directly opposed to all the proud and unsubdued feelings of the human heart. If a man acknowledges that the atonement of Christ was necessary to save him he must acknowledge that he was in a lost state without it and that his salvation is the result of unmerited grace. Thus all the glory is taken out of the hands of the creature and transferred to the Creator. The man who would be saved by the sufferings of Christ must come as a humble penitent and with a broken heart apply to that Saviour or he can never be interested in his merits. His It is only those who labour and are heavy laden whom Christ relieves. *He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* But men by nature are self-righteous and do not feel their need of any atonement for their sins. They imagine that God is so entirely merciful and so little regardless of the honor of his law that he will accept of them without any atonement merely upon their repentance. And they feel as if such a mode of saving sinners by the blood and merits of Christ were altogether absurd - and repugnant to all our ideas of the character and government of God. *No position in Divinity to my apprehension, says a late writer, is more opposed to the general language of the New Testament, none which reflects greater dishonor on the character and moral government of the Deity, none which is more apt to mislead men in the highest concerns of religion, than the doctrine, that God requires complete satisfaction to be made to his justice for sin, by the vicarious sufferings of our Saviour to propitiate his regard to the repenting sinner.*

*This doctrine represents our God as inexorable in his disposition: it deprives him of those moral attributes which are the proper foundation of our love and gratitude: it destroys all goodness and all mercy in the pardon of the repenting sinner; and supposes that God has introduced a principle in his administrations, which would disgrace any government on earth. [Source: A. Bancroft, 1822]*

But on the other hand the man who is really convinced that he is lost a lost sinner and that sin is the abominable thing which the Lord hateth can find no relief no resting place but in the atonement the vicarious sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. He can see no other way which God can be just while he justifies the believer in Jesus and he looks upon the plan of salvation as displaying most wonderfully the love of God and giving it a prominence and a glory which no other mode of reconciliation could present. As soon as the Spirit convinces a man of sin he is convinced of the necessity of an atonement: and with him it is not a mere inoperative speculative opinion but it is unwrought into all his experience and is the only ground of all his hopes. We see then most forcibly how important how necessary it is that God should reveal to men the true priestly character of Christ in order to their receiving it - and in this view of the subject we may say most emphatically with Paul, *no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost.*

If then it be true that men do not cordially and savingly receive Christ in his true character till they are taught of God how important is it that we be in unceasing in our prayers for divine influences to guide us and subdue us to a reception of it! We must give up our confidence in the opinions of men around us and rely alone on the teachings of the Spirit of God. Christ only can we hope to be freed from error. And it is not a few feeble wishes a few languid petitions that are sufficient. We must pray fervently and earnestly and constantly over the Scriptures - that we know and embrace Christ in his true character. *Other foundations can no man lay, etc.* Christ is the sum and substance of the Gospel: and a mistake concerning his character puts our salvation in jeopardy. Let no man therefore who has formed his opinions without prior earnest fervent prayer imagine himself to be on safe ground. Neither let the man who speculatively acknowledges Christ in his true character suppose that he is blessed if his life do not conform to that belief. Peter was blessed because a new heart had been given him and he had cordially embraced a Saviour by a living faith. And let none of us my hearers rest easy a moment until we savingly know him whom to know is life eternal.

Delivered

At Conway March 1823

## Sermon 156 Divine Influence in Free Agency

[Sermon No. 156, "Divine Influence and Free Agency," Philippians 2:12-13,  
1823 Mar, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 11]

Philippians 2:12-13

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;  
For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

This text affords a happy instance of the mode in which the sacred writers treat subjects that may admit of controversy. How to reconcile the special operation of the Spirit upon the heart of man with his free agency and with the necessity of his own exertions has long been a fruitful source of difficulty and contention. And how did the scriptures treat the subject? They simply declare as the text shows that it is God who works in us to will and to do while at the same time they fearlessly urged Christians to work out their own salvation. That is they assert the doctrine of divine influence in its full extent and the necessity of men's exerting themselves to secure their salvation. They assert both these things on the authority of the living God and lead us to believe them or reject them as we think proper.

But some one will say these things are directly contradictory. If the one be true then the other is not true. If God must first operate upon the hearts of men in order to give them a will to perform their duty then surely it is of no use to attempt to work out our salvation any farther than we are impelled to it by this operation upon our wills. Especially if God works in us to will and to do according to his good pleasure and not according to our wishes or desires or prayers then is it altogether useless for us to take one step until it shall be his pleasure to move us. We must wait for him to impel us.

This reasoning appears clear and conclusive to very many and hence some are led to deny the necessity or reality of special divine influences and others to adopt the notion that they are to sit still like the man at the pool of Siloam and wait for the moving of the waters. But in replying to all such I should say - do you believe the bible to be the word of God and every part of it to be received as undeniable truth? If you do believe this then I would further enquire whether it be possible the necessity of special divine influences in order dispose man to the service of God - and the necessity of man's exerting himself at the same time - is it possible to express these two things more clearly than the text does? To say then that these two doctrines are contradictory what is it but to say that God contradicts himself? And to endeavor to prove this contradiction by our own reasonings however clear they may seem what is it but to set up our reason in opposition to the declarations of God? But the truth is whatever such a man may say - he does not believe in the inspiration and infallibility of scripture: and the proper way to address such an one is not to attempt to prove that the bible teaches the doctrine of special divine influence in conjunction with human efforts: because however clear the bible may be on these points this man will not believe them. But the right motive of addressing such an one is to go back to the root of the difficulty and endeavor to prove the authenticity and inspiration of Scripture.

Although speculative minds and unsanctified hearts may find much difficulty in the text yet to the humble sincere prayerful Christian it is one of the plainest and most consoling passages in the bible. All the difficulty to be found it lies in men not being able to make it coincide with their preconceived

notions. But the humble Christian has no theories to support. The great anxiety is to know what God has revealed; and he comes to the reading of scripture with his heart teachable and humble as that of a little child earnestly desirous of the sincere milk of the world. And when he reads the text he will be tempted to say - how refreshing is it this percept. I have been often told by man that if the work of my conversion and salvation depend on the special influences of the Spirit and it depend on the sovereign pleasure of God whether that Spirit shall be poured out then all human efforts are idle and we are mere machines. But here I find God who will not who cannot lie not only declaring that he works in me to will and to do but also making this a reason why I should work out my salvation with fear and trembling. If there had been any real contradiction between these two things would not my merciful heavenly father have declared it? And is it not better - is it not safer to trust his word than the reasonings of men when they apparently disagree. Surely I have a more sure word of prophecy to which I shall do well to take heed as to a light that shineth in a dark place.

As already remarked the text is extremely easy to understand if the heart be right. There is no ambiguity in the words nor in their arrangement. Every body sees or might see that the apostle here declares that God excites Christians to will and to do according as he pleases and that he makes this a reason why they should work out their salvation with fear and trembling. My hearers any paraphrase of mine - or any attempt to make the meaning more plain will only obscure it. Still however the text is an important one and gives rise to many interesting and useful principles some of which do not appear at first light. To these I now invite your attention.

First. We learn from the text the necessity of a Christian's using diligently the means of grace.

The opinion has sometimes been maintained that when a man is once converted being sure of heaven and dependant on the grace of God to work in him to will and to do - it is not necessary that he be very solicitous about exerting himself in a preparation for meeting Christ. And very many who could discard such an opinion in so many words do notwithstanding feel such a kind of security in their kind of supposed conversion as prevents them from a vigorous diligent improvement of the means of sanctification. They have a feeling as if it would not be very dangerous for them sometimes to neglect the assemblies of God's people or the regular reading of his word or selfish animation or secret prayer since they have been converted and God will continue the works he has long begun in them until the day of Jesus Christ. In other words they do not feel as if their salvation might depend upon their diligently attending the means of grace. But how does the text flash in the in the face of such opinions and such practices! *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling* is the imperative command. *Why? Because it is God that worketh in you to will and to do.* In other words the man who is really converted will find in the fact that the work is of God a motive urging him to the most vigorous exertions to make his calling and election election serve - instead of arguing from thence that it is not necessary for him to do anything - because God must work in him. So that whatever Christian professor finds himself dispensed to excuse himself laborious exertions by the doctrine of divine influences may rest assured that he has no reason to hope that he ever has been converted. Such an abuse of this doctrine is made by impenitent men and whoever follows them may conclude himself also impenitent. God has so constituted things that the moment a man begins to neglect a diligent use of the means of grace it is not possible he should have any evidence of his being a Christian. It is no matter what experience he can relate - it is no matter even if he have had revelations from heaven - this neglect shows him to be now in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. So that it is not going too far to say that a man's salvation may depend upon his improvement or neglect of the means of grace. That is by neglecting to improve them he may show himself to be utterly unfit for heaven.

Secondly I infer from the text that Christians should (not be overconfident of their good estates) usually exercise a trembling solicitude respecting their own salvation.

It is with fear and trembling that they are to work out their salvation - that is with a trembling solicitude lest after all they should be cast about. This solicitude is not inconsistent with a well grounded and comfortable hope of heaven nor with a firm faith in the promises of God. But it implies a distrust in ourselves. It implies a deep sense of the deceitfulness and depravity of the heart. It implies a humble fear lest our fruits do not prove us to have been born of God and it will produce an earnest effort to keep all the commandments of God. It is opposed to that self-confident boldness which rashly presumes upon the mercy of God without any scriptural evidence of a change of heart.

There is indeed such a thing as the faith of assurance. The apostle had it and many martyrs have had it and many Christians who had spent half a century in the faithful hardening services of Christ have had it. But to persons of this character it seems principally confined. It is not to be expected in ordinary cases - in the commencement of the Christian course. It is the reward of long and faithful service - it is the boon put into the hearts of those who are called to pass through fiery trials for Christ's sake. And it is a very different thing from that presumptuous confidence which is sometimes manifested by the young convert and by Christians before they become acquainted with their own hearts.

In the third place the text assigns a peculiar reason why Christians should be unremittingly diligent in working out their own salvation.

*Work out your own salvation, says Paul, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* In other words the fact that God disposes men to love and serve him is a reason for them to labour as if their salvation depended on themselves.

How very different my hearers is this view of the subject from that which mankind generally take! They say if we are dependant on the grace or Spirit of God for every holy desire and willingness to perform his will then they can do and are bound to do nothing themselves. They shall be saved if God please to save them and they must perish if he do not convert them. That is they assign that as a reason for doing nothing which Paul assigns as a reason for most vigorous exertion. So that either mankind are incorrect in their views of this subject or the Apostle is incorrect.

And let it be known to mankind that they are incorrect and that the words of Paul are words of truth and soberness. The fact that God works in men to will and to do is a reason and a powerful one too why they should strive earnestly to enter heaven. For the truth is if God did not thus produce a disposition in the heart to love and serve him no man would ever have any such disposition. We are by nature wholly alienated from God and our wills are opposite to his. *There is none that doeth good no not one.* And when God by his Holy Spirit changes these perverse wills shall we then sink down into inaction when we have just acquired the power of serving him acceptably? Before this we took no pleasure in performing his will - and now that we have a relish given us for it is this the time to cease our exertions? And shall our obligations to obey God now that our hearts are changed have no influence upon us? God has granted to us the greatest of all blessings - regenerating grace: and now he demands of us that we take to us the whole armour of God and go forth in his service and strive to enter in at the strait gate. And shall we lying under the weight of such unspeakable obligations owing him such a seamless debt of gratitude shall we shrink from a compliance? Shall we say to God that as he has begun a good work in our hearts we leave it to him to carry it on? The truth is brethren to sink down into stupor and inaction and not to strive to work out our salvation implies that God never has wrought in us to will and to do.



And hence results another ground on which divine influence is a reason for active exertion. The moment a supposed Christian does not labour and strive he shows himself to have no love to God nor to his service. Genuine Christian love constrains a man to work out his own salvation and to strive for the salvation of others. It impels a man forward to the work in spite of remaining corruption and in spite of all his reasonings. He feels a grateful emotion swelling his bosom and leading him to cry out *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* He sees a Saviour God's only begotten Son suffering and dying in his stead. He sees the eternal Spirit entering his wretched heart while yet estranges from God and turning its affections towards the divine character and who that is a Christian can resist such motives to obedience? The truth is Christians know by their daily experience that the more deeply they feel the need of divine grace - the more they feel their entire dependance upon this the greater are their efforts to work out their own salvation. No man ever felt more deeply and thoroughly his dependance than Paul and yet no man ever agonized more to enter into heaven. This is a paradox to the men of the world. They suppose that if a man feels himself wholly dependant for a disposition to serve God upon his grace he will sink down into a stupid apathy whereas experience shows that a man's exertions will rise just in proportion to his sense of this dependance. *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, etc.*

In the fourth place I infer from the text the nature of Divine influence on the human heart.

I infer that this influence is wholly of a moral character and not of a physical. That is it operates by suasion and not by compulsion. A man for instance whose will is turned from sinful to holy objects acts just as freely in the one as in the other. He is just as much a free agent and unconstrained in his choice of holiness to day as he was in his preference of sin yesterday.

There is a strong disposition in men to form an idea of something compulsory when any thing is said about the special converting influences of the Holy Spirit. They feel as if it were forcing them to become religious. But if we take the Scriptures for our guide such an idea will be found to be contradictory to them. God is said to work in men to will. Now when a man really wills to do a thing he does it voluntarily. It is his choice to do it - he would be crossed if he were to neglect doing it. Indeed it is not possible for a man to do anything by constraint and yet will to do it. The very idea of compulsion takes away the idea of his willing it and the fact that he wills it destroys the notion of compulsion.

Now the effect of divine influence according to scripture is to turn the will from things that are unholy to things that are holy. And this is done in such a manner that a man is sensible of nothing different from the natural operation of his own faculties. He changes his will as it seems to him in consequence of the new motives that are set before him. He is sensible of no force except what results from the presentations of arguments and he acts according to the desires and feelings of his heart. Nay in many instances men are not sensible till a long time afterward - till they learn it from God's word that their conversion was effected by the Holy Spirit. Let those then who associate the idea of compulsion with divine influence and on that account reject the doctrine of special grace bring no more objections against it until they have faithfully considered the words of the text. And on the other hand let those who pretend that they have a sensible impression of the operations of the Spirit at the time they are made cease any longer maintaining such an enthusiastic dream. And let those who maintain the doctrine of divine influence in scripture purity be encouraged to persevere in its defense.

Fifthly. We learn from the text the extent of divine influence.

It has long been an important enquiry who begins the works of conversion, God or man? Is God moved

by his own pleasure to pour out his Spirit upon the sinner or does the sinner really and sincerely desirous of holiness offer up such prayers as are acceptable to God and such as move him to convert the sinner. The text declares that God works in men *to will*. I ask then whether a man ever sincerely and truly desired any thing which he is not willing to possess? If he does then the sinner is the first mover in the works of regeneration. If he do not God is the first mover since he first makes men willing to love and serve Him. And the text says nothing about doing this in answer to the sinner's prayer: but merely according to *his good pleasure*.

Again divine influence does not exceed the rational faculties of the soul. No new faculty is thereby imparted to a man: but only a new direction given to those he currently possesses. Neither is any new revelation imparted to him: but he is enabled to understand more clearly that which he already possesses. And this too in so easy and natural a manner that all seemed a mere natural effort of the faculties.

Sixthly. The text teaches us that one of the most fervent supplications of the Christian should be for divine influence to enable him to work out his salvation.

If he ever reaches heaven if he ever advances one step in the divine life it will be through God's workings in him to will and to do of his good pleasure. He ought therefore to improve the influences he has already felt in praying for more and greater effusions.

And how great is his encouragement for such prayers! He is assured that God is more ready to give the Holy Spirit than earthly parents to give good gifts unto their children and that *he that hath to him shall be given and he shall have abundantly*.

And the apostles are martyrs who have gone before us my brethren have left us their example to encourage us in this union of earnest prayers with earnest exertions. Look at the instance of Paul already alluded to – *It forms, says a late writer, a striking part of the example of Paul, that while he did as much toward the extension of the Christian faith as if the whole success of the cause depended upon his doing, he prayed as much and as fervently for this object, as if all his doings were of no consequence. A fine testimony to the supremacy of God, from the man, who, in labours was more abundant than any that ever came after him, that he counted all as nothing, unless God would interfere to put his blessings upon all, and to give his efficacy to all! He who looked so busy, and whose hand was so constantly engaged, in the work that was before him, looked for all his success to that help which cometh from the sanctuary of God. There was his eye directed. Thence alone did he expect a blessing upon his endeavours. He wrought, and that with diligence too, because God bade him; but he also prayed, and that with equal diligence, because God had revealed to him, that plant as he may, and water as he may, God alone giveth the increase. He did homage to the will of God, by the labours of the ever-working minister, and he did homage to the power of God, by the devotions of the ever-praying minister. He did not say, what signifies my working, for God alone can work with effect? This is very true, but God chooses to work by instruments - and Paul, by the question, Lord, what will thou have me to do? expressed his readiness to be an instrument in his hand. Neither did he say, what signifies my praying, for I have got a work here to do, and it is enough that I be diligent in the performance of it. No - for the power of God must be acknowledged, and a sense of his power must mingle with all our performances; and therefore it is that the Apostle kept both working and praying; and with him they formed two distinct emanations of the same principle; and while there are many who make these Christian graces to neutralize each other, the judicious and clear-sighted Paul, who had received the Spirit of a sound mind, could give his unembarrassed vigour to both these exercises, and combine, in his own example, the utmost diligence in*

*doing, with the utmost dependance on him who can alone give to that doing all its fruits and all its efficacy.* (Chalmers)

And shall we not be safe my brethren in following the example of Paul? Shall we not be unsafe in neglecting to follow it? Let us go therefore and do likewise. That at last we may say with him I have fought a good fight I have finished my course and I have kept the faith henceforth there is paid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me at that day.

Delivered

At Conway March 1823

At Amherst West Parish November 1831

At Amherst West Parish January 12 1844

At South Hadley August 22 1859

## Sermon 158 Christ Crucified

[Sermon No. 158, "Christ Crucified," I Corinthians 2:2, 1823 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 11]

I Corinthians 2:2

*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

When this declaration is viewed by the cold calculating eye of this world's philosophy there appears in it something of the spirit of enthusiasm. *Paul thou art beside thyself* is the feeling of very many on reading the passage. And others unable from their own experience to see why he should thus exclude everything but Christ and his cross are disposed to set it down as something beyond their comprehension.

But my hearers these words are professedly not the words which man's wisdom *teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teaches*. And they purport to be the deliberate opinion of an Apostle. It becomes an important question then whether his was a wise determination? If it was it should be adopted by every minister of the gospel. If it was not it is high time it should be exposed as false and dangerous.

Is it knowledge by all true Christians that Christ crucified is the great central doctrine of revealed religion and that all the other doctrines are but so many lines pointing to this centre. Other doctrines are important nay some are essential but they derive their importance from their relation to the cross of Christ. On this ground it will not be difficult to show the wisdom of the apostle in the determination of the text.

In the first place no other doctrine of the bible can be preached with saving effect when unaccompanied by that of Christ crucified.

I do not mean and Paul did not mean that the doctrine of redemption by the cross of Christ should be made the theme of every discourse. But every discourse should recognize this doctrine and be founded on it and point to it. Paul preached and wrote much on other doctrines of revelation but Christ crucified was the basis on which he rested all his preaching. *I deliver unto you, says he to the Corinthians, first of all that which I also received how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures*. He does not say he delivered to them that important or that essential truth: but he calls it first of all making at the grand central pillar of the system.

It is not possible perhaps to name any truth of scripture which would not lose its chief efficacy if Christ crucified be kept out of sight. Suppose the preacher urge upon men with all the force of the bible their utter alienation and depravity. And suppose he convince them that they are lost and inimical to the character and government of God. What effect will this belief have upon them except to make them miserable unless they can also be pointed to Christ's blood for the purification and healing of their souls? Without this they might weep and mourn over their desperate condition but they would never have their enmity dissolved nor their hearts renewed until Christ be revealed to them.

Suppose the minister convince his people of the necessity of regeneration by water and the Spirit: yet that Spirit is to be poured out only through the merits of a crucified Saviour. Suppose he were to exhibit the character of God. He must either exhibit God as a con assuming fire or else hold him up as reconciling the world unto himself through the cross. He could not direct his hearers to trust in the mercy of God without the merits of the Saviour. For God has declared that he will not bestow mercy upon any only through Jesus Christ. It is presumptuous it is downright madness to venture upon the clemency of God any other way than by the cross after he has said *other foundation can no man lay, etc.* In no other way can the preacher describe God as just while he justifies the believer. So that the true character of God cannot be exhibited only as an object of terror to the sinner except it be viewed through the cross. And I might proceed to apply similar remarks to every doctrine of the bible. All lose their efficacy all become sources of distress so long as the cross is kept out of sight. A dark gloom is imparted to religion and a sickly hue spread over another world.

*Death and the grave are doleful themes  
For sinful mortal worms to sing,  
Except a Saviour's sweeter beams  
Dispel the gloom, and touch the string. [Source: Hymn by S. Medley, 1802]*

2. God grants his blessing to accompany no other preaching but that of Christ and him crucified.

*Paul may plant and Apollos water but God giveth the increase. Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord. My speech and my preaching, says the Apostle in the context, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man but in the power of God.* No preaching then will produce the salvation of men none will have any radical influence if it be not accompanied by the Spirit of God. But God has declared that there is salvation in none other than for *there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved but that of Jesus Christ. Other foundation on no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ. No man cometh unto the Father but by him.* If his cross be not preached therefore no man will come to the Father. God will withhold those influences which are absolutely necessary to make men Christians. Men can indeed be persuaded that they are Christians without Christ and perhaps be induced to engage in some external amendment if they are told they can thereby prove procure heaven. But this is all. Then they will stop – and then the native opposition to God will be retained - all their worldly mindedness will stick fast to them and they will in fact be still farther than ever from anything like real experimental religion. Not one will be regenerated by the Spirit of God without which they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven: for it is only God as view through a Saviour that can slay the enmity of our hearts and work in us that radical reformation essential to salvation. It is no matter if a preacher come before his hearers with the talents of an angel and the eloquence of an archangel - no matter if he have the feelings and understandings of his hearers at his control so as to turn them where he pleases - it is no matter if he make them weep and resolve to reform - if the cross be not held up before them - if a bleeding Saviour be not pressed upon their acceptance - they may weep and they may resolve: but in regard to God they will still remain the same unreconciled hostile beings is ever.

*Tis when the cross is preached, and only then  
That from the pulpit a mysterious power  
Goes forth to renovated moral man.  
The cross imparts vitality divine  
And energy omnipotent to truth  
In its whole system, ineffectual else,*

*Inanimate!* [Source: Poem, Carlos Wilcox, 1822]

When Christ crucified is exalted faithfully and constantly before men and they are told that here is their only refuge then does the minister of the Gospel perceive a solemnity resting in the mind of his hearers. A divine influence accompanies his words - they reach the hearts - they reach the conscience - they stir up impenitent men to examine whether they are on safe ground - and he sees many turning from their evil ways and exhibiting a thorough reformation in their lives. And although many remain having their ears made heavy and their hearts gross - and to whom the preaching of the cross is foolishness yet some are converted and are made ready for the everlasting enjoyment of heaven.

And here am I reminded of an instructive incident in the history of the first Moravian missionaries who visited the inhospitable shores of Greenland. They there found the poor degraded ignorant race of man and immediately set about their instruction. And what could be more natural then to endeavour in the first place to convince them of the existence of God as the groundwork of all their future efforts. They pointed them to the sun moon and the stars over their heads and to the various objects on earth and tried to lead the simple minds of the Esquimaux *through nature up to nature's God*. These untutored Indians listened to their instructors with stupid awe or wondering amazement and remained sunk as low as ever in the mire of corruption and ignorance and although they knew not how to disprove what the missionaries told them yet they did not believe it. But the missionaries at length held up before them the cross of Christ - told him at once how he had suffered and died for men and how ready he was to receive repentant sinners; and they saw with astonishment a magical influence or rather a divine influence accompanying their words and the poor degraded Greenlanders trembled in view of their sins and flew to the cross of the Redeemer and rose from their pollutions and shook off their long fixed habits of sin and for nearly a century a Christian church has been growing among them and thousands have lived the life and died the death of the Christian. A powerful; testimony to the wisdom of Paul's determination when he came to the Corinthian idolaters, *not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified*. It is this only that has power to search the seared conscience and the callous heart of unrenewed man. He will record the power of argument he will shake off the temporary impressions of a moving eloquence he will look with stupid unconcern upon the eternal glories of heaven and remain unalarmed at the worm that never dies and the fire that is never quenched: but the cross of Christ he cannot resist - he is awakened by it he is melted by he it - he is converted by it.

3. To preach Christ crucified is the only effectual way of preaching morality.

It is true indeed that there is an inherent loveliness in virtue which ought to recommend it to the reception of all. And indeed all are willing to acknowledge that virtue is lovely and vice odious. But it is one thing to condemn this and quite another to practice accordingly. It needs something more powerful than a conviction of the understanding that virtue is amiable to turn our hostile hearts to its reception. Something more urgent than an exhibition of the moral beauty of virtue must be brought to bear on the mass of corruption in the human heart or it will never exhibit much of that beauty in itself. Philosophers and others have spent much time in urging men to the practice of all the virtues and they have fancied because men assented to the correctness of their exhortations and reasonings that they were about to witness a moral salvation around them but they have waited only to see men pass on in the same beaten trench of iniquity.

*Men there are  
Men of illustrious name, that have employed  
Years in portraying to admiring crowds*

*In vivid colours, with the magic hand  
 A genius guided by refining taste,  
 The loveliness of virtue, and of vice  
 The hideous features, and in urging all,  
 With eloquent tongue, to make the happy choice,  
 And, at the end, with grief and self-reproach,  
 Have looked around in vain for the reformed.  
 On all the moral field within its reach,  
 Their beautiful philosophy has fallen  
 Powerless, as moonlight cold on the cold snow.  
 Convinced at length of this its impotence,  
 And taught divinely to proclaim instead  
 Messiah crucified, on the same field  
 With joy have they beheld an aspect new,  
 From fruits abundant of immortal growth. [Source: Poem by Carlos Wilcox, 1827]*

With the names and characters of two of these men who have made such an experiment as this you are acquainted my hearers – viz. Dr. Scott and Dr. Chalmers. Permit me here to quote the testimony of the latter to this point.

*And here, says he in his address to his former parishioners, I cannot but record the effect of an actual undesigned experiment, which I prosecuted for upwards of twelve years among you. For the greater part of that time I could expatiate on the meanness and dishonesty on the villainy of falsehood on the despicable arts of calumny – in a word upon all those deformities of character which awaken the natural indignation of the human heart against the pests and disturbers of human society. Now could I upon the strength of these warm expostulations have got the thief to give up his stealing and the evil speaker his censoriousness and the liar his deviations from truth I should have felt all the repose of one who had gotten his ultimate object. It never occurred to me that all this might have been done and yet every soul of every hearer have remained in full alienation from God; and that even could I have established in the bosom of one who stole such a principle of abhorrence at the meanness of dishonesty that he was prevailed upon to steal no more, he might still have retained a heart as completely unturned to God and as totally unpossessed by a principle of love to him as before. In a word though I might have made him a more upright and honorable man, I might have left him as destitute of religious principles as ever. But the interesting fact is, that during the whole of that period in which I made no attempt against the natural enmity of the mind to God, while I was intentive to the way in which this enmity is dissolved even by the free offer on that one hand and the believing acceptance on the other, of the Gospel salvation, while Christ through whose blood the sinner, who by nature stand afar off, is brought near to the heavenly Lawgiver whom he has offended was scarcely ever spoken of or spoken of in such a way as stripped him of all the impotency of his character and offices, even at this time did press the reformation of honour and truth and integrity among my people, but I never once heard of any such reformation having been effected amongst them. If there was any thing at all brought about in this way it was more than I ever got any account of. I am not sensible that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and proprieties of social life had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of my parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed by the utter alienation of the heart in all its desires and affections from God; it was not till reconciliation to him become the distinct and the prominent object of my ministerial exertions it was not till I took the scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before them: it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance, and the Holy Spirit given through the channel of Christ's mediatorship to all who ask him was set before*

*them as the unceasing object of their dependance and their prayers; it was not in one word till the contemplations of my people were turned to these great and essential elements in the business of a soul providing for its interest with God, and the concerns of its eternity, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformatations which I aforetime made the earnest and the zealous but I am afraid at the same time the ultimate object of my earlier ministrations.* And Dr. Chalmers thus addresses his people in conclusion - *You have at least taught me that to preach Christ is the only effective way of preaching morality in all its branches and out of your humble cottages have I gathered a lesson which I pray I may be enabled to carry with all its simplicity into a wider theater to bring with all the power of its subduing efficacy upon the vices of a more crowded population.* What testimony my hearers beside that of Paul what experiment can be better than this to the inefficiency of any other kind of preaching but Christ crucified even when morality only is to be promoted!

4. Souls burdened with sin can derive no genuine peace or consolation but in the preaching of Christ crucified.

It will not answer to direct such persons to confide in the mere mercy of God without any regard to the springs and merits of the Saviour. For God has solemnly declared that he will not have mercy upon one soul of all the human family only through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is tempting God therefore it is defying him it is making him a liar to direct a sinner to go to him in this manner. But in Christ there is plenteous redemption and mercy and there may the preacher fearlessly direct the man oppressed with the burthen of sin. And there will he find that peace the world can neither give nor take away. How wise therefore in this respect was the determination of Paul to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified! For although the anxious enquirer may be pointed to some thing else for peace and comfort and he may somewhere else obtain a delusive peace: yet it will only serve to render his final disappointment more awful and his future doom more intolerable.

5. Finally. The preaching of Christ crucified is the grand instrument of the sanctification of believers.

Christ is the living bread that came down from heaven: and his followers are described *as living by faith on the Son of God.* He is the food to their souls – the daily manna without which they must languish and die. When sin oppresses them they fly to Jesus and cast their cares upon him and find his promise of assistance fulfilled - when temptations thicken they fly to the banner of Christ and hide themselves beneath the covert of his wings. When faith languishes they look at the bleeding cross and it revives and hope gathers new strength. Christ preached in his various offices affords consolation now to one believer and now to another: and they *grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour.* Take away Christ and his cross from the Gospel preached and leanness would be sent into their souls. Indeed the hidden life of a Christian is made up of the hidden life of a Christian is made up very much of intercourse with Christ.

*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believers ear;  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear.  
It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
And calms the troubled breast;  
Tis manna to the hungry soul,  
And to the weary rest.  
Jesus! My Shepherd, Husband, Friend,*



*My Prophet, Priest and King;  
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
Accept the praise I bring. [Source: Poem by John Newton]*

It was then I remark in the first place the wisdom which is from above that lead Paul to resolve to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And it is therefore wisdom in all his followers in the ministry to adhere to his example and make Jesus and his cross the grand central point of all his preaching. As the planets revolve about the sun and receive their light and heat from thence so should the other doctrines of scripture be made to revolve about this and from it receive their vitality and power. In this way and only in this will the preacher be instrumental of the salvation of men. All other modes of preaching will be swept away as refuges of lies.

Finally if Christ crucified be so important to be preached not less important my hearers is it that you should all receive him by a living faith into your hearts. Resist if you will every thing else sinner: but resist not a bleeding dying Saviour. Stand unmoved and bid defiance if you will to the thunders of Almighty God which are hanging over your head just ready to burst; but let the love of a Saviour melt you down into a childlike submission. This is the most powerful motive I shall ever present to you. It is the most powerful I can find in the universe. And if you remain unmoved at this nothing will move you even the summons that calls you to the bar of judgement.

*[The last page appears to be a later addition.]*

I remember secondly that we see in this subject the reason why Christians cannot and ought not to be satisfied with any preaching that leaves out or neglects Christ crucified. They are often charged with narrow minded bigotry because they will not listen to such preaching. But surely they are bound to complain when the very essence of the thread of life is thus withheld and they are left to starve upon mere philosophical abstractions and jejune sentimentalism. To complain and make efforts to better his condition is just as reasonable in such a case for the Christian as for a man shut up in a prison and denied even bread and water to struggle to escape and there is no more bigotry or sectarianism in the one case than in the other.

I remark secondly (thirdly) that in this subject we are the reason why those who reject the doctrine of Christ crucified reject also the other essential truths of the bible and those who disbelieve the latter strike out also the former from their creed. This is only acting in a consistent manner for when Christ crucified is cast out of the Gospel system the other doctrines become mere insulated useless speculations which are not worth relating. And when these are first cast off Christ crucified becomes of no efficacy. Some men do indeed stand for a time upon middle ground and adopt a patchwork system of truth. But ere long they see their inconsistency and either giving off into the heathen regions of scepticism back again into the sphere where this cross forms the sinner of attraction.

Delivered

At Conway March 1823

At Amherst College April 1832

At Amherst College September 1843

At Deerfield September 1836

At Amherst West Parish May 1840

At Amherst East Parish May 1840

## Sermon 160 Secret Prayer

[Sermon No. 160, "Secret Prayer," Matthew 6:6, 1823 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 12]

Matthew 6:6

*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door,  
pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

The hypocrisy of the Pharisees was not confined to the mere tithing of anise and cumin: but it extended to their devotions. *They love to pray*, says the Saviour, *standing in the synagogues and in the corner of the streets that they may be seen of men*. It was not that they might be heard of God but that they might be seen of men: that they might obtain the character of the eminently pious. How astonishingly insensible must they have been to the presence of God who all the time was looking into their hearts and knew their motives! It is no wonder that Christ who knew all their secret feelings - their inner rottenness should have denominated them a generation of vipers!

It was in opposition to this ostentatious pharisaical mode of worshiping God that that the Saviour uttered the injunction of the text for his disciples when they prayed to go into their closets and there make known to God the desires of their hearts. This then is a positive injunction to the performance of secret prayer with a promise of reward annexed. And to a consideration of this subject I now request your attention.

It is not indeed a new subject and it is not one which I expect to make interesting by brilliancy of remarks or eloquent appeals. But if a subject notwithstanding of supreme importance - a subject well adapted to our reflections on this holy day. It is a subject well calculated to try religious feelings. For if we do not relish such a subject as this - if we sit uneasy while it is faithfully exhibited - if we find anything like disgust against it there is overpowering evidence that we have no part nor lot in the inheritance of Christians. For it is idle it is presumptuous folly - it is the height of delusion to talk of being a believer - or of going to heaven and yet to neglect secret prayer.

In pursuing this subject I shall first consider the injunction itself and then the reward promised to faithful performance of it.

In considering the precept in the text I remark.

First. That secret prayer is a duty enjoined both by reason and scripture.

Every man has very many subjects for prayer in his own case which cannot with propriety be introduced before others. Everyone has a particular besetting sin against which he should pray most earnestly and constantly - and this cannot be mentioned except in general terms before our brethren. It is important that we come alone and confess this before God and like Paul thrice beseech that it may depart from us and if not that God would make his grace sufficient for us. All of us have many sinful thoughts and feelings for which we cannot implore pardon in public without making ourselves the laughingstock of

the ungodly. But in the closet we can enter into all the subjects with that particularity which they demand. We can there also plead more earnestly with God than in public. Those repetitions of a particular supplication which would be improper before others may here be indulged. The command of Christ not to use vain repetitions in our prayers does not contradict this assertion. This command is directed against repeating over our prayers merely because we imagine their frequency will prevail upon God. But this is not opposed to a man's praying thrice as Christ did in Gethsemane for the same thing provided we do it from the overflowings of the heart and not as the heathen and the Catholics count our prayers as we utter them in the expectation of being heard on account of their number.

There are many other kinds of supplications all men have occasion for making which it would not be proper and which would rather injure the cause of religion to present in presence of others. We may have certain particular friends for whose conversion or sanctification we have a spirit of prayer. And to name them in public would disgust them and look like ostentation. But when we have entered our closet *and shut the door* we can commend *them with strong crying and tears into him that is able to save*.

It is to be feared however that many men when they have joined or pretended to join in public and family prayers feel as if the whole work were finished and as if any farther petitions were superfluous. But the truth is a man who does not pray in his closet does not pray in his family or in public. I mean he does not pray an acceptable prayer. There is something very different in going alone into the presence of God and falling on our knees to supplicate his mercy and make known to him our wants. But in coming with others into his presence and uniting in our supplications. Many a man who could do the latter without being at all impressed could not do the former without having his knees smite together like those of Belshazzar. There is much in the idea of having others with us in one case to keep away a realizing sense of God's presence: but in the other we cannot help recollecting that an holy and a heart searching God is looking directly upon us with a glance that cannot be eluded. There it is that impenitent careless sinners hate nothing so much as fervent prayer. They dare not object to it openly: but in heart they have powerful aversion to the practice: and nothing in the whole of scripture sounds so gratifying to their ears as such commands as the text contains. Hence too the man who neglects secret prayer may rest assured that he does not love God. There cannot be more conclusive proof of this than such a neglect. For whoever loves God will love to come near him and hold intercourse with him: and in no other way on earth can we come so near the living God as by prayer. The Christian finds his closet a place to which he loves to resort: for there does he hold sweet communion with God and in his Lord Jesus Christ: there does he find the chains of the world dropping from his soul and the wings of an angel given him to mount up and look within the veil. Take away the privilege of secret prayer from such an one and the world would be a dreary spot.

In the second place I remark that secret prayer should be habitual and constant.

All men practice secret devotions when they are in trouble. Take away a friend or some earthly good from a man or bring him on the bed of sickness and nigh the gates of death and there is no one who will not cry earnestly to God in secret for help and assistance. But if men are not Christians when the trouble or the danger is over they neglect calling upon God in their closets. It is merely fear that brings them to secret prayer. They fear the effects of God's wrath and are compelled to cry for help: but the real Christian not only fears but reverences and loves the character of God and therefore he prays whether there be any special danger or not. To attend to secret prayer is not with such a man an inconsistent irregular business; but it is a daily employment. He has stated reasons not only for public and family but also for secret worship of God. The ancient pious Jews had their particular hours every

day when they offered up their devotions. *Evening and morning and at noon*, says the Psalmist, *will I pray and cry aloud*. And what season can be more proper to enter into immediate communion with God than in the morning when we are about to commence the employments of the day and especially need the divine protection and assistance and at night when we are about to close our eyes to sleep perhaps the sleep of death!

There are two seasons when secret prayer is particularly proper. And we ought to be careful that we do not let these seasons pass without attending to it. Whether we feel in a proper place for it or not it is wrong to neglect the stated times. If we feel in a Spirit of prayer it will be delightful to attend to it – if we do not the thought ought to alarm us and cause us to fly to our closets to obtain the proper spirit.

We are very apt indeed to excuse ourselves sometimes from this regular and constant attention to secret prayer from an idea that we can find no opportunity in many cases to be alone without letting our object be known and thus seeming to be ostentatious. Such seasons do indeed occur in life: but they occur not so often as we imagine. The difficulty in too many instances is that we have no disposition to seize upon an opportunity and therefore do not diligently seek for one. If we had a disposition to pray we should usually find God would provide us with an opportunity. But in every case we can offer up ejaculatory prayer and if it be out of our power to be formally into our closets God will hear and answer these ejaculations. But he will not hear them if it be mere slothfulness that keeps us out of the closet. There are some Christians who ease conscience by putting up morning and evening these ejaculatory petitions as a substitute for going into their closets. But such usually have leanness sent into their souls. God will not be put off with this half way worship. He has commanded us to go into our closets when we pray and he will not admit mere laziness as an adequate apology for neglecting to comply.

But will not this having certain stated seasons for secret devotion lead to formality in the service and cause us to depend upon the mere observance of the seasons rather than upon the manner of praying? Morning and evening are not indeed the only seasons for secret prayer. The Christian often feels the need of going repeatedly into his closet: especially if any deep trial or temptation beset him or any particular mercies have visited him or he feels a peculiar Spirit of prayer. Like the Psalmist he sometimes has occasion to say, *seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments*. The man who feels as if the work were all done when the morning and evening services are completed does indeed rely upon his performances like a heathen or a Catholic. But on the other hand to neglect a diligent attention at least morning and evening to secret prayer is apt and almost infallibly does lead a person ere long to neglect it altogether except in special season such as affliction and danger. And when a man has reached this pass he may rest assured that his prayers are not one of them answered. The history of the church however furnishes many instances of this character. It is not infrequent for a sinner to have his attention specially awakened to this concern of his soul and for a time no one is more faithful and constant to his closet duties. But after a few months perhaps he begins to neglect them and finally to leave the closet altogether unless perhaps once a week or once a month to go and pray there or during afflictions or a revival of religion. And yet there are some poor deluded creatures of this character who are weak enough to imagine themselves to be Christians. But God preserve the church from such mushroom piety as this!

Thirdly - I remark that secret prayer should be earnest fervent and persevering.

No duty in Scripture is urged more plainly than fervency and perseverance in prayer. It was a *fervent effectual prayer that availeth much*. And Christ *spake a parable to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint*. Saying *there was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:*

*And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.* You all remember how Jacob obtained the blessing: by wrestling all night with the angel - by declaring that he could not give over without the blessing - Christ too has not only instructed us to pray fervently and perseveringly but has himself set us many examples of this kind of prayer. In Gethsemane he exhibited a remarkable mixture of this fervency - *Being in agony*, says Luke, *he prayed more earnestly*. And we frequently read in the evangelists that when Jesus had sent the *multitudes away*, *he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone*. Nay we read in one instance at least how *he continued all night in prayer to God* thus alone in the mountain. So true is it that

*Cold Mountains and the midnight air*

*Witnessed the fervor of his prayer. [Source: Hymn by Isaac Watts, 1707]*

And shall his followers his professed disciples profit nothing by his example? Shall they regard a certain form of words repeated over without feeling as sufficient? Can a man who has any sense of what he is and of what God is fall on his knees alone before God without being deeply and solemnly affected? A Christian may sometimes through the pressure of infirmity disease or the power of Satan be left to such a state: but if a man always continue in such a frame in his closet let him begin to doubt - it is high time for him to doubt whether he be a Christian. If we come before God insensible and unaffected as the walls that surround us - if after praying for a season we remain as unhumbled and unfeeling as at the commencement then we have need for bowing again before God before we leave our closets. For a general rule which we ought not to violate we ought not to go out of our closets till we can carry out from thence a humble heart - a deep sense of the goodness and holiness of God and of our sinfulness - a solemn impression of the worth of the soul and the importance of improving the time allotted to us and a strong desire of being instrumental of the everlasting welfare of our fellow man. To produce such a state of feeling is the grand object of secret prayer - and if we are not brought to it our prayers are of little avail before God. If we were to go before an earthly prince to plead for our lives or the lives of others we should urge our suit with the utmost fervor and perseverance. And shall we show less eagerness less feeling when pleading before the eternal holy God for the salvation of the immortal soul.

There are some professed Christians who find their feelings much interested in public religious performances and can weep when the feeling prayer is put up - but who are unaffected and stupid in their closets. But if a man is not as much affected as much interested and as deeply impressed when praying alone as when uniting with others there is the greatest reason to fear that his is a religion of mere animal impulses and not the religion of Jesus Christ.

I proceed into the second general head to consider the reward promised to secret prayer in the text.

And first the humble Christian will receive the things he asks for if they are not contrary to the will of God.

Does he pray for more faith more love more humility more righteousness? God will assuredly bestow them upon him though not perhaps in the precise manner he may expect. Does he pray for the influences of the Holy Spirit. They will be shed down without any doubt: for we know that God is more ready to bestow them than earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. Does he pray for the

conversion of his friends. Unless they are given over to reprobate minds sooner or later if the prayers are fervent and persevering will they be converted. Does he pray for a general revival of religion? Sooner or later a revival will follow. Does he pray for the conversion of the heathens? The heathen will ere long be converted. Does he pray for temporal mercies for himself or friends? They will be granted if his or their good demand it - and surely he cannot wish them bestow if they would prove an injury.

And this answer to prayer will in a sense be openly granted. It will be obvious to the world generally that the man is a Christian. That is he will exhibit the graces of a Christian. It will be evident that he holds communion with God and receives a supply of strength and grace and blessed news from heaven. O what a blessed reward!

But secondly - secret prayer will be rewarded openly before the universe at the day of judgment.

That crown of glory for which the Christian has so often and earnestly pray will be given him in the presence of men and angels. Sin that body of death from which he has so entreated to be delivered will be forever removed from him. Holiness after which he has so long thirsted and prayed will be granted him without measure and without alloy. In short God will own him as a son before the universe and set upon him the seal of everlasting love and approbation. He will bid him welcome to *those joys eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither have entered into the heart of man*. O glorious reward! O inheritance rich beyond our most exalted conceptions!

My brethren how important is secret prayer! It is the main spring of growth in grace. It is the charm that drives away the darkness of the believer and gives him peace and joy. It detaches the affections from the world - and fixes them on God and eternity. How important that we pray constantly and habitually - fervently and perseveringly! More and more am I satisfied that this is one of the most distinguishing marks of the true Christian. The sinner sometimes prays in his closet. But with Job I ask, *will he always call upon God*. Will he pray habitually - will he pray fervently and perseveringly? Rarely - very rarely I believe. So that here is an important mark by which to judge of our real state. It does no good for a man who neglects this duty to flatter himself that he is going to heaven. No matter how zealous in public no matter how high he stands in the opinion of the world or in his own opinion - if he neglect this, in the opinion of God, he is an enemy to his character.

And what a privilege to the believer is secret prayer! It is a deeply kept refuge from the storms of the world. It is a fountain whence the Christian draws living water. Let adversity and reproach and persecution and fiery trials come - so long as the believer has a closet to go to - he will be calm he will be safe he will be blessed. He has an eternal and almighty Friend who will never leave nor forsake him - but who will bring him at last into his heavenly kingdom above where is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. Let us then my brethren be drawn more frequently into our closets. Let us pray there more earnestly than ever yet we have done. Let us not only profess to be Christians before men but be really such before God. Let us honour and serve him in secret and he will honor us in public. In this world we shall receive an hundredfold and in another world inherit everlasting life.

Delivered

At Conway March 1823

At Amherst College July 1833

At Amherst West Parish November 1836

## Sermon 161 Examination of the Scriptures

[Sermon No. 161, "Examination of the Scriptures," John 5:39, 1823 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 12]

John 5:39

*Search the scriptures.*

*[Includes a discussion about translations of the Bible.]*

If it had pleased God to reveal to man a volume of rules directing him how to acquire learning or riches or honours or pleasures it would have been unnecessary to add at the conclusion *search this book*. For all would read it with avidity and do their utmost to attain to the sense of every passage that appeared at first sight dark or obscure. *The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light*. And when a volume of rules is given to man directing him how to attain durable riches even an unfading and eternal inheritance the case is very different. It then becomes necessary not only to write the text upon that volume but also to appoint men in season and out of season on the Sabbath and at other times to press upon men the contents of this divinely inspired book and urge them by every motive in heaven earth and hell to search the scriptures as containing the words of eternal life. Although this is the only book under heaven God has ever given to man - the only one that is infallible and containing the only plan by which men can be saved from everlasting ruin and inherit everlasting glory yet with all the injunctions the book itself contains for men to search it and with all that the public expounders of it can do to persuade men to examine it - thousands and tens of thousands in Gospel lands remain in almost as utter ignorance of its contents as if it never had been put into their hands. Many who have it in their house suffer it to lie day after day and week after week unopened and unthought of while they eagerly enquire of every one who will show them any earthly good - any better mode of carrying on the farm or managing the money and the merchandise. This is a conduct which resembles that of the condemned criminal who has a reprieve sent him but he lays it up unopened and spends his time in counting the links of the chain that bind him down.

There are some however who through the grace of God are disposed to search the holy scriptures. Yet such is the blindness of the human heart that we are liable to enter upon this examination with a wrong state affecting - with corrupt or prejudicial minds and thus as the apostle testifies of some in his day we are disposed to *wrest the scriptures to our own destruction* or to *handle the word of God deceitfully*. It becomes important therefore that we be well acquainted with the manner in which the Scriptures ought to be searched. That we know with what feelings we ought to undertake the search and by what rules we ought to be guided in the interpretation of the sacred volume. For it seems from the word of Peter just recited that we may search the Scriptures in such a way that it will end not in our salvation but in our destruction. I propose therefore at this time to suggest certain rules by which we should be guided in our reading of the Scriptures.

In some of Paul's epistles we find certain important hints on this subject brought to our notice. *We are not as many, says he, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ*. The first inference to be drawn from this passage is that we should be careful in



reading the Scriptures not to mix with its truths human speculations and thus corrupt it. We should be disposed to receive the truths of Scripture in their simple unadulterated purity. The thought that the *foolishness of God is wiser than men* should go along with us in all our examinations of the bible. That is although we may find many things in that volume which appear unimportant and foolish to us yet we should recollect that we are incompetent judges and that we ought to confide in the wisdom of God and believe what he has revealed with the teachableness of little children. Had men studied the Scriptures with this godly sincerity this filial confidence in God had they not mixed human reasonings and speculations with truths very many of the wild and soul destroying errors with which every age of the church have teamed would never have been broached.

Another rule in regard to searching the Scriptures which is derived from the passage of Paul above recited is that we should exercise a godly sincerity in studying them - *but as of sincerity*, says he. The bible is searched with many sorts of sincerity. One man is sincerely desirous that he may find certain peculiar notions there which he has adopted without examining this standard. Another sincerely hopes he shall not find certain doctrines there against which his heart is prejudiced. The third sincerely desires that he shall find nothing there to shake his hope and condemn him. Another sincerely wishes that all his prejudices against any part of the word of God may be subdued and that he may be enabled to understand aright every doctrine and precept therein whether they favour or oppose his previous notions and prejudices and that these truths may worth work their proper influence on his heart. This is the sincerity Paul exercised - and any that is different from this will lead a man to *wrest the Scriptures to his own destruction*. But this will lead him to examine all scriptures patiently and impartially. He will have no theories to support if he finds anything in the bible contradictory to them. And when he meets with passages that condemn his conduct he will reform his conduct instead of endeavoring to seek out some far fetched construction to ease his conscience and when he meets with doctrines that strike a deathblow at his pride instead of caviling he adheres to his resolution of embracing everything he finds in the bible.

Another important rule in reading scripture which Paul points out in the passage above recited is that we feel as if we are dependant on God for light and direction in the examination of his word: *but as of God*, says he. The man who is really a sincere man - and who realizes how insufficient we are to direct ourselves aright amid so many temptations to error - the man who knows how diverse how totally contrary are the opinions of many learned men in regard to the meaning of the most important passages - in short the man who realize that his eternal destiny may be dependant upon the manner in which he conducts his enquiries into the meaning of the bible will resort with an earnest importunity to the throne of grace for light and assistance. He will pray with anxious earnestness for that meek Spirit which God has promised he will guide in judgment. Feeling that he lacks wisdom himself he will plead the promise of God that had will liberally to such and he will rely more upon this hope for divine influence than upon his own sagacity in reading the Scriptures: although the hope of receiving it will quicken him to the more diligent use of his own faculties. If we do not read the Scriptures with the sense of our dependance on God for assistance we have reason to fear that we do not search them to any good purpose. We shall be liable to be driven about by every error of doctrine: because we are not rooted and grounded in the truth.

Another feeling with which we should search the Scriptures is a sense that the eye of God is looking upon our hearts and that ere long we shall be brought before his bar to give an account of the manner in which we have use his revelation. *But as in the sight of God*, says Paul. We ought continually to feel that the eye of God is inspecting us when we read his word and that he is writing down the manner in which we examine it to be exhibited for or against us at the final judgment. A sense of the divine presence

would tend to make us honest and sincere in our investigations and repress any prejudices we might have imbibed. And if to this idea we add one equally solemn thought that we are now as we read the bible transacting for the judgment day it would exert an increased influence on our heart in keeping them in a proper frame for examining within impartiality divine truth. Too many of us read the bible with the same listless captious Spirit with which we read some human production: and we are apt to forget the solemn consequences that are pendant on those searches. We forget that we are fixing our characters for eternity. We forget that it will depend upon that examination whether we dwell forever in heaven or forever in hell. We forgot that we are to give an account at the tremendous the impartial tribunal of God for the manner in which we read this book of God.

Another rule all sincere and sober minded men adopt in reading the bible to be cautious not hastily to pronounce different passages in Scripture to be contradictory. There are some subjects presented in the bible concerning which we are able without doubt to determine satisfactorily when any other thing advanced is contradictory to them. Of this nature are the all the moral precepts and indeed all the positive commands and prohibitions threatening and promises the scripture contains. But there are very many other things in the same bible concerning which we are unable to deny that this or that is inconsistent therewith because they are purely matters of revelation and upon subjects too of which at the best we have but imperfect ideas. Of this nature are the mode of the Divine existence - the counsels of the Divine will - the method of his government - the nature and degree of future happiness and misery and the like. On such subjects as these we should be extremely cautious how we decide that such and such things are contradictions. The man who has a proper sense how limited is his knowledge how liable he is to err in his speculations and how safe it is to trust the declarations of God will be more anxious to learn exactly what the bible teaches concerning such subjects and others of similar character than he will be to reconcile any apparent discrepancies. The neglect of observing this caution has been the fruitful source of innumerable errors in every age of the church. May we profit by the examples of others!

Another important work we ought to observe in the bible is to search it thoroughly and understandingly. Being accustomed to hear the words from our childhood we are extremely apt to pass them over with the same carelessness and inattention with which we were in the habit of repeating them in our school boy days. It is well therefore not to read extensive portions of Scripture at once but to dwell upon those we do read till if possible we attain to the meaning and enquire whether it will apply to ourselves. And in order to determine the sense of any particular text we must examine the context and enquire what is the general subject upon which the sacred writer is there treating. If a person has a bible with marginal references there can scarcely be a better mode of reading it than to begin with a verse in one place and then look out all the parallel passages instead of reading by chapters. This gives a person a view at once of all the bible has said on any particular doctrine or duty. And if it is a well known fact that the Scriptures were not divided into verses and chapters till about 200 or 300 years ago - and then it was done merely for the convenience of translating.

And here a question of considerable interest occurs. Can a man depend on our common translation of the bible? Are there not such errors in it as will lead him very much astray? Much has been said on this subject and it has become extremely common for men when they are close pressed by a passage of scripture to avoid its force by denying the correctness of the translation. There are indeed some passages which if translated differently would give the meaning of the writers a little more clearly - and perhaps some so rendered as to convey a wrong meaning. And what translation was ever entirely free of errors? They are all human efforts and therefore must be imperfect. But the fact is that our common translation of the bible is acknowledged by all judicious men of whatever sect to be a wonderfully

correct exhibition of the mind of the Spirit. And many of the most eminent critics declare that were another translation to be undertaken in these days there is no probability that it would be as good as the present one. This as you probably know was made in the reign of James I. He employed 54 of the most learned men in Great Britain who being divided into six classes took their several parts of the bible to translate and ere it was complete they spent nearly three years.

And my hearers I confidently assert that a man may fearlessly take this translation for his guide without the least danger of being led into essential error. It contains all the essentials of religion so clearly expressed that by an honest mind they cannot be mistaken. But that you need not depend upon my word in this matter I will present you with the words of some of the ablest and most learned men in the study of the bible now living. *It may safely be asserted, says he, that the worst translation which was ever made of the Scriptures contains all that is essential to salvation either as it respects doctrine or practice. Some translations have added things to the Scriptures which religion does not require; and some have made one part of the bible to gainsay another part. But the worst translation never removed nor wholly obscured the great and leading principles of the Christian religion. Our common version is on the whole a most noble production for the time in which it was made. The divines of that day were very different Hebrew scholars from what most of their successors have been in England or Scotland.* I could present you with similar passages from the writings of other learned men of various denominations - though I cannot present the evidence of these opinions without referring to the original languages which would be improper in the pulpit. But the humble Christian may put away all fears lest he shall be misled by our common translation of the bible. He may fearlessly take it for his guide with the assurance that if he believes the doctrines it contains and practice its precepts his salvation is sure. He may rest confident that the truths it exhibits are such as constituted the creed of Paul and Peter and John and all the disciples evangelist and martyrs of Christ.

*[The following paragraph is inserted opposite this page.]*

I feel a confidence that I do not thus recommend our common version of the bible because I fear a new translation would contain less evidence of the doctrines of the cross which I believe to be taught in the Scriptures: for I do really believe that a new translation would contain more evidence in favor of these doctrines than the present one. Take the divinity of Christ for instance. For every text containing that doctrine in our common bible which would be altered so as not to teach it in the new translation there is no doubt two others would be added in proof of it from those in which a person unacquainted with the original Greek and Hebrew discovers no evidence of the doctrine.

Another thing important to be remembered in reading the bible is that every passage in it has one and only one meaning. It was customary among explainers of the word of God in former times to proceed on the supposition that every part of Scripture had a great variety of meanings. The Jewish expositors indeed asserted that on every point of Scripture hang mountains of sense and they say that God gave the law to Moses that a thing can be shown to be clear and unclear 49 different ways. And many Christian writers have supposed that a great many passages of scripture have a variety of meanings. Thus the same prophecy has often been supposed to apply to David and also to Christ. The same text has been thought to predict the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the world. But this is introducing the utmost confusion into the meaning of scripture. There might be many things in the case of David and of Christ that were similar so that the same description could apply to both: and so of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the world. But at the same time the Holy Spirit had one of these events only one in view when he inspired the sacred writers. If we allow more than one meaning to a text of Scripture there is no reason why we may not allow a thousand if so many can be found.

But it may be asked may not one event be a type of another? And for instance was not David a type of Christ - and the destruction of Jerusalem a type of the destruction of the world? This may be true - certainly it is true in regard to David and Christ because the bible expressly calls Christ David. But at the same time every passage of scripture originally applies to the one or the other exclusively: although by accommodation it may be made to apply to the other. But we should take heart that we remember it is by accommodation and nothing more. And this leads me to suggest a caution in regard to making one thing in scripture typical of another.

That many things under the Jewish dispensation were typical of things under the Gospel dispensation cannot be doubted. But the mere circumstance that the two things have a general resemblance is no proof of this. If it were the world would be full of types. How then shall we know when anything mentioned in the Old Testament is typical of something in the New? We can know it only by the express declarations of Jehovah. We are therefore to regard just so much of the Old Testament as typical as the N. Testament declares to be so and no more. An observance of this rule would have presented many idle and useless fancies with which the church has been a burden.

It is desirable that by the direction of such rules as these we should search the Scriptures. Adhering closely to them - striving not to mix with these pure truths the vain speculations and prejudices of man - coming to them with godly sincerity and a simple dependance on the grace of God reading them with a sense of God's presence and with an eye fixed on the judgment seat not hastily charging upon them contradictions reading them thoroughly and understandingly and affixing one and only one definite meaning to each sentence observing these rules and we may hope to understand the greater part of them. Some difficult passages may be found that will cause us perplexity. And after trying all other methods to attain the sense resort may be had to commentaries. These present the views of learning and piety before us and give us an opportunity of deciding upon the meaning with greater certainty. And in choosing what commentator we will consult and can consult without danger to our souls (for all of them are human) let us enquire not only was he a learned man: but was he a man of devoted piety - was he a man of faith and prayer and holy obedience? For men learning without piety will present but a lifeless skeleton of scripture even if it do not pervert its meaning.

I shall add only one rule more to be observed in reading the bible. And that is we should read it with self application. When we read any doctrinal passage we should enquire do I believe this doctrine from my heart and does it influence my practice? When we read a precept let us ask do I observe this precept or do I violate it? When we read a threatening let us ask is this directed against me? When we read a promise let us ask can I appropriate it to myself. And when we read of any exercise of heart such as loving God and man living to the glory of God let us ask whether we have ever felt any thing of the kind? If we neglect asking such questions - we read the bible in vain. In did I say? No: God has declared that *the word that goeth out of his mouth shall not return unto him void; but it shall accomplish that which he pleases and prosper in the thing whereto he sends it.* We read how the ministration of that word *proves to some a favour of life unto life and to others a favour of death unto death.* We ought to feel this when we read the bible. We ought to remember that it is working in us salvation or condemnation. God has not put put so rich a treasure into our hearts to be lightened with impunity. The reading of the bible to the impenitent man so long as he continues impenitent only aggravates his condemnation. Do you say then sinner that you will not read it at all? But a willful neglect of it after it is once put into your hands will make your final ruin still more intolerable - so that to read it and yet neglect to apply it exposes one to a double curse but to neglect it altogether brings down a fourfold curse. The only way to escape from this dilemma is for every impenitent man to give up his heart to God. The bible will be a millstone

around the neck of those who neglect to search it or wrest it to their own destruction – and this it will be that will drag down the sinner who perishes in a Gospel land so much below the heathen so much below Tyre and Sidon and Nineveh.

Delivered

At Conway April 1823

At Amherst College July 1832

At Amherst West Parish April 1834

At Amherst North Parish May 1838

## Sermon 163 God's Wisdom Different from Man's

[Sermon No. 163, "God's Wisdom Different From Man's," Isaiah 55:8-9, 1823 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 12]

Isaiah 55:8-9

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts  
than your thoughts.*

*[Discussion of justification by faith, not by works.]*

This language of God has a special reference to his dealings with sinners in order to their salvation. The ways and thoughts of God in relation to other subjects may be and are very different from the ways of man. Yet as no other point is brought into view in the text or context, I shall limit myself to this and endeavour to point out some of the chief things in regard to the mode of saving the world from the ruins of the apostasy in which the thoughts and ways of men are different from the thoughts and ways of God. That is were man to devise a plan for saving our ruined race I would point out some things in which that plan would be essentially different from the one God has actually proposed and adopted.

In the first place man would not suppose an atonement necessary.

By an atonement I mean that some other being should take the place of man - suffer in his stead the curse of a broken law - make the law honorable in the sight of the universe by those suffering and a perfect obedience to its requirements and in this way render it consistent for God to pardon the returning impenitent - or in the expressing words of the bible that God *could be just while he justifies the believer in Jesus*. But such a sacrifice and display before the universe as this such a vindication of the law as this does not appear necessary to human wisdom. Were man to invent a plan of saving the world repentance would be the only condition contained in it. There appears to the human mind when unenlightened from heaven something so circuitous and savouring of mystery in the idea of an atonement rendered by offending substitute that as an holy apostle has testified it is foolishness and a stumbling block. Man wishes to draw directly upon God for salvation without the intervention of third being to lay his hand upon them both. The reasoning of man would be like this on the subject. Men are sinners and God is a merciful being ready to forgive. What can he require more than that those who have offended him should repent of it and reform! It looks like unreasonable severity in God to require that an innocent being should take the place of man and suffer in his stead - and to suppose God would require this is robbing him of his attributes of mercy. It would make salvation not a free gift but a debt due to man on account of the atonement. It would make God an inexorable tyrant destitute of all compassion. An atonement therefore is unnecessary.

Such is only a sample of the reasoning by which a man would be led to conclude an atonement to be unnecessary in the plan of salvation. And the cause of such an erroneous conclusion is that men by nature have very inadequate views of the strictness and extent of the laws of God. They have no idea but that God is altogether such a one as themselves. They see one man injure another and frequently

nothing is demanded of the offender but to repent and reform. They see the same requirement of human government from their refractory subjects and of parents from their undutiful children and hence they conclude the same course will be the one God will adopt. But God's ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts. The rules of action between man and man may be violated and yet not endanger the universe. But the Divine law cannot be broken without aiming a deathblow at the happiness of men and angels and even at the character and throne of God. And it is more consequence that the law of God should be vindicated and made honorable than the happiness or even existence of the universe should be preserved. Better it is that heaven and earth should pass away than that one jot or tittle of the law should fail. And it is because men when unenlightened from heaven have no idea of the strictness and importance of God's law that they see no need of atonement. They judge of the standard God must adopt in relation to sin from their own low and inadequate views of its demerit and deserts.

But *the foolishness of God is wiser than men*. The things of God which to men appear foolish are in reality vastly wiser than all the substitutes the wisdom of man could propose. And although the atonement by the sufferings and obedience of Christ be foolishness to the mind of man yet it is one of the brightest displays of God's wisdom which the universe has ever witnessed. Man supposes God could pardon the returning sinner on condition of repentance merely: but the wisdom of God declares that without shedding of blood there is no remission and that this is the only way in which God could be just while he justifies the believer and that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved but the name of Jesus. Men may trust to their own wisdom in this respect if they please and madly presume upon God's mercy without an atonement but they do it at their peril. They do it in the face of the whole bible in almost every page of which this doctrine shines in unclouded splendour. And although man's wisdom may call it foolishness yet those taught of God those who have been made by divine grace to receive the atonement - discovery in it a most wonderful display of the wisdom and mercy of God. Nay even angels desire to look into this subject. And to strike it out of the Gospel is that wants to annihilate every important distinction between Christianity and Deism. In this doctrine then what a striking display have we of the difference between human and divine wisdom.

Secondly were men left to frame their own system of religion they would make justification dependant not upon faith in Christ but upon good works.

It demanded all the powerful reasoning and authoritative declarations of the apostle Paul – may more it demanded the influences of the Spirit of God to drive away Romans and Galatians from the doctrine of justification by works. If we have done as well as we can says man's wisdom - if we have striven to do justly love mercy and walk humbly before God what more can he require of us? If he be a merciful and a just God he will certainly not require more of us than this: and we shall be accepted of him if we do this and rejected if we willfully disobey him. Where is the need then of referring us to the merits of Christ to a faith in him as the ground of justification. What have the deeds of another to do with us? God is surely unjust if he reward men for what another has done for them and have no reference to their own good works. And if it good works have no influence in procuring justification before God then it is entirely useless to practice them and we shall be as likely to be justified without them as with them. Good works therefore have an influence in our justification and are in part the ground of it. To rely for our acceptance on the doings of another is dangerous is delusive and is calculated to foster human corruptions and to make men substitute words for deeds and to cherish in them every evil propensity.

With such a kind of syllogisms as these does the unenlightened wisdom of man satisfy itself that the doctrine of gratuitous justification by faith alone is not and cannot be deemed to be true. The sacred

writers well knowing how strong was the trend in the human heart to adopt such reasonings as conclusive and how opposed it is to receive anything so mortifying to the pride as the doctrine of justification by faith have stated this doctrine so repeatedly and plainly and enforced it so urgently that it seems impossible it should be misunderstood. Paul tells us especially that by works of law no flesh living shall be justified and that we are justified by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus - in whom he hopes to be found not having his own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through faith in Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith. He cuts off altogether the expectation of being justified in any degree by our own works. He endeavours to prove that they avail nothing in regard to justification and that if any man place any dependance upon them in this respect he builds on on the sand. This motto is *if it be by grace then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works then is it no more grace otherwise works is no more works*. How directly opposed is this to the wisdom of man! How heavenly a blow it aims at human deficiency! How loudly it proclaims in the ear of man that after *he is done all he is but an unprofitable servant!* How do the splendid reasonings of the human mind and all the loft feelings of the heart receive a final overthrow when God speaks! How is God at once exalted and man humbled! How do the costly garments of self-righteousness drop from us in a moment and we stand poor blind and naked beggars whose only resort is the righteousness of Christ. Abased in the dust before God how deeply does the stirring feel that God's thoughts and ways are higher than his thoughts and ways as the heavens are higher than the earth!

Thirdly the method of saving sinners by distinguishing grace and by faith without works appears to the wisdom of man to tend to immorality and licentiousness.

Man would have the choice of salvation to depend upon his own will and not upon the grace of God. The means of attaining salvation are placed within the reach of us all and some men improve them and some do not. And those who improve them are not impelled to it by an influence of God's Spirit since this would be compulsion by their own voluntary unbiased choice. If it depended on a special influence of the Spirit these men have nothing to do but to wait for that influence and if it be granted they will be saved - but if withheld they will perish: but not through any fault of theirs since on such a supposition they are mere machines. And besides to suppose God should take one and have another of his own mere pleasure without perceiving any difference in their characters as a ground of choice is to make God an arbitrary tyrant and to charge him with the grossest injustice and to reprove him as acting without any reason.

But notwithstanding all this appears to exceedingly plain to the wisdom of the world yet the wisdom of God has not hesitated to declare that *men are saved by grace through faith and that not themselves it is the gift of God: and that men become the sons of God not by blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but by the will of God. Having predestined them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself according to the good pleasure of his will to the praise of the glory of his graces*. It is indeed true that all man in Christian lands enjoy the means of grace and have all the faculties requisite to constitute them free agents and to make them blame worthy for neglecting to secure salvation. And yet it is a certain fact that such is the perversity of man's heart that when left to himself he never will choose to embrace religion. If God does dare men to make their own choice they will infallibly one and all they of them choose the road to eternal death. Men will not come to Christ that they might have life. If God therefore does not choose for them if he do not send an influence into their heart to subdue their opposition they will all perish. So it is our owing to his distinguishing grace that any are saved. We cannot indeed see all the reasons why he takes one and leaves another: yet ought we not to rejoice that he selects any and brings them into his kingdom rather than that all should perish? Is not this a cause of great thankfulness? It has this effect upon those who are the subject of his grace. They have a new



principle put within them and they find a sense of the goodness of God leading them on the performance of every good work. So that instead of promoting immorality and licentiousness the distinguishing grace of God in calling and justifying man has a direct contrary effect. They begin a *new course – old things are done away behold all things are become new*. Indeed there is no other principle that has half the power to awaken men to the practice of holiness as this. Just so blind is the wisdom of man! *It puts darkness for light and light for darkness - bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter*. And though these objections have been a thousand times repeated against the doctrine of grace and a thousand times repeated by facts and arguments yet they are still addressed with all the confidence of a new principle.

Fourthly to the wisdom of man it does not appear consistent or just that sinners should be punished eternally.

As already remarked men have by nature no adequate views of the evil of sin or the purity of the law and importance of the laws of God. Their views on the subject are infinitely below the truth for they do not believe sin to be an infinite evil and therefore they cannot see that it deserves eternal torments. They are willing to allow that the sinner ought to receive some punishment but the idea of a misery that shows no end and no mitigation is utterly inconsistent with the notion of the character of God.

But the God of man's imagination the God whom the natural heart loves is very different from the God of the bible. Eternal misery in all its unalleviated bitterness is declared in scripture to be the inevitable fortune of all who are not born of water in the Spirit. In the 25th Chapter of Matthew the very same word is used describe the duration of the punishment of the wicked which is used to describe the duration of the happiness of the righteous. It follows inevitably that the misery of the wicked will last as long as the happiness of the righteous. Here does human wisdom receive another mortification and finds it necessary either to give up her reasonings about future punishment or reject altogether the bible.

Fifthly the wisdom of man would dictate that the rich and learned and mighty men of the earth should be selected of God converted to him and thus made instrumental of the extension of his kingdom. To our limited view it seems as if it were hardly possible for religion to be advanced without the cooperation of these. But mark the superior wisdom of God! He converts just enough of such men to show that he is able to do it while he chooses his most official instruments from among the poor and despised. God hath *chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen yea and things which are not to bring to naught things that are*. For it is written, *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the inventions of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*

Finally God's ways are not as our ways in his forbearance with sinners.

Had any man abused our goodness as we have abused God's had he oppose our will as we have opposed God's had he insulted us as we have insulted him had he tried to injure us as we have tried to injure God - we should have cut off such an one without mercy. We could not have endured one day so much obstinacy pursue perverseness and opposition as God endures with impenitent men year after year. What reason have they then to rejoice that they are in the hands of God and not of man!

A few remarks will close the subject. First this subject exhibits to us in strong light the weakness and insufficiency of human reason to guide us in the concerns of religion.

Human wisdom in its most improved state would lead us wrong in almost every thing relating to salvation. God has adopted a plan of salvation radically different from any that men would devise and therefore has man been left to the guidance of his reason in the concerns of his soul he would inevitably have gone to destruction. How forcibly then does the inspired exhortation come home upon us not to lean to our own understanding. Yet how many are there who do lean upon this staff of a broken reed!

Secondly we learn how incompetent we are to decide concerning propriety or impropriety the reasonableness or unreasonableness of any doctrine God may reveal.

In many cases which are clear - in which there can be no doubt what God has revealed such as justification by faith and the eternity of future torments in these cases human wisdom until enlightenment from heaven decides directly contrary to Divine wisdom. And how dangerous for us is it in other cases to set up our reason as a judge of what is reasonable and what is unreasonable in the revelation God has given us! It is madness to take such a course.

Thirdly the subject shows us how implicitly we ought to receive all that is contained in the word of God.

Here is an infallible standard given us and God has told us all his character all his will concerning us and all our duty. To set up another standard therefore and pervert and warp the scriptures to it is no better than an open denial of revelation. And no folly can be greater than to cavil at any thing contained in the bible.

Fourthly the subject shows us that it is no surprise that we have adopted a false system of Christian doctrines because it contains some things which to human reason appears foolishness and inconsistency.

Is certain that men in ancient times did consider the system of doctrines taught by Christ and his apostles to be absurd contradictory and dangerous in their tendency. Says Paul, *we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness*. To the doctrine of justification he mentions this as an objection which an opposer would produce. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?* To the doctrine of God's sovereign and electing grace he brings forward a caviler saying, *Why doth he yet find fault for who hath resisted his will*. When Christ also preached to Nicodemus the doctrine of regeneration he replied, *how can these things be?* These objections therefore existed against the Gospel which Christ and his apostles taught and if we have adopted a system against which no such objections exist is it not certain that it is a different system from that believed and preached by Christ and his apostles?

Finally how ought we to rejoice that man has not been left to himself to devise a plan of salvation. That plan would have been the death raiment of our race. It would have contained no atonement - it would have sought justification by works instead of faith and have deemed the doctrine of eternal torments – without these men would never...

*[Continues at top of first page.]*

...have found favour with God. He might have presumed upon the divine mercy without the atoning blood of a Saviour – but it would have been madness – it would have been ruin. Blessed be God that the Gospel is in our hands and it has promised that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

Delivered

At Conway June 1823

At Amherst College December 1836

## Sermon 164 Pleas for Intemperance in Eating Considered

[Sermon No. 164, Pleas for Intemperance in Eating Considered, 1834?,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 9: folder 14]

Ecclesiastes 2:24

*There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink,  
and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour.*

*[There is no record of this sermon having been delivered or published; possibly Hitchcock intended to submit it for publication but never did, or possibly it was rejected. See paragraph 2.]*

*[The number 164 doesn't actually appear on this manuscript; it is attached to #163; AC archives assigned the number 164.]*

This text among others has been often applied to justify excess eating and drinking: not, indeed, by the desperate glutton, or ruined drunkard. For such men do not enquire whether the bible sustain or condemn them. But it is the moderately intemperate (if such a phrase do not contain a contradiction) who make such a use of scripture to put at rest the struggles of awakened conscience. Yet sober criticism does not justify such an application of the text. For in the first place, who derives the most pleasure from eating and drinking? The man who eats and drinks in such quantity and variety, and of such quality, and at such seasons, as will satisfy the appetite: or he who practices temperance in all things. Not he, will be the general exclamation, who ties himself up to rules and denies himself so many comforts as that. But the answer of all such, as in different ages have tried the strict temperance system (and some of them, having indulged to excesses in early life, could compare indulgence with abstemiousness) has been, that they never found real enjoyment in eating and drinking till they adopted this system. The strictly temperate, therefore, do really enjoy the most good in their labor from eating and drinking; and with more propriety than any other class of men, can they say, that *there is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink*, providing only that he eat and drink in moderation.

Some commentators, however, suppose that this text does, in fact, express the whole heart of an epicure. They maintain, and with some degree of plausibility, that the whole book of Ecclesiastes is a dialogue between a libertine and a pious man, concerning the chief good. In the first four chapters, Solomon puts into the mouth of the libertine, a variety of irreligious sentiments, and afterwards furnishes their refutation from the lips of the good man. The text is the favorite conclusion of the libertine, to which he often recurs, that nothing is better for a man than to eat and drink and be merry. Better men than he have in every age justified what they call an occasional excess of eating and drinking; but which reason and experience call intemperance. Such will see, however, that whether they adopt the first or the second view that has been given of the text, it will not lend them much support. It furnishes, however, a convenient introduction to the examination of the principal pleas which men make for neglecting and attention to those dietetic precepts, that have been presented in a former discourse (See No. 10 Vol. 8). Such an examination is the principal object which I now have in view.

In the first place it is said that God would not have provided so great variety of food, if he had not

intended man should enjoy to some extent, even beyond what mere health and strength demand. For an apostle has said, that *every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.*

The divine beneficence is, indeed, conspicuously displayed in providing a profusion of aliment, of the most delicious and salutary kinds. But it does not follow that God intended all this variety to be taken at once, nor in greater quantity than health and strength require. Now the system of temperance for which I plead, allows, and even recommends, that every kind of food which agrees with the system should be used at the proper times; though it allows only one substantial sort with its proper accompaniments at a meal. And I maintain that to use variety at different meals, but not at the same meal, was the intention of Providence. For this is the way in which a greater amount of pleasure can be enjoyed than by the common method of multiplying dishes at the same meal. And since God is infinitely benevolent, we may infer that that course, upon the whole, which produces the greatest amount of happiness is the one most agreeable to his will. On the same principle indulgence in eating beyond what health and strength call for, is proved to be contrary to the divine intention; because all such excesses diminish the amount of pleasure derived from food; as all impartial testimony shows.

It appears then, that the creatures of God which he has provided for nourishment are good, only when used in that quantity and manner which he intended: and to learn his intentions in this respect, we must consult experience in the laws of our animal constitution. A multitude of articles, however, are used for food by men, which they call creatures of God, and therefore good, and to be received with thanksgiving; but He calls them the inventions of fallen man, and therefore bad, and to be rejected as injurious. It is a monstrous perversion of things as well as wicked abuse of words, to take the simple articles which nature furnishes for food, and having compounded them in every variety of form, and added a multitude of ingredients which were never intended for aliment, to call them *creatures of God*, and to regard it as an act of ingratitude not to receive them as food. This is the way in which cookery and appetite impose upon even conscientious men.

Secondly, it is said that the natural appetite is a safe guide in respect to eating and drinking; and therefore rules are unnecessary.

That the sensation of hunger was intended to be our guide, in respect the quantity and quality of food, is too obvious to admit of doubt. But by indulgence, that guide has become converted into a deceiver. *A natural appetite which always prefers the simplest food and drink is now scarcely to be found among civilized men.* In almost every individual the appetite has become more or less artificial, capricious, and inordinate; in consequence of over eating in early life. Now if the coachman, or the pilot, become intoxicated, will they be trusted? No more can you confide in intoxicated appetite. If a really natural appetite can be regained, and no high seasoned compound dishes be afterward presented to pervert it, but those *creatures of God* only, that he has provided for nourishment, then away, I say, with all dietetic rules, and follow nature. Other rules are but a substitute for such a guide. But until that guide can be recovered; so long as nature is perverted and sophisticated as it now is universally; we must employ them, or plunge into the chaos of intemperance.

You plead for taking the appetite as a guide in eating. And what more than this does the veriest glutton demand? For do you suppose he eats without an appetite? And can you persuade him that his is not a natural appetite? You cannot then censure him, however enormous his excesses. For he follows precisely the same rule as yourself. Your appetite may at present be satisfied with two or three dishes; but his demands perhaps half a dozen: yet the only difference between him and you, is, that he has

proceeded a little farther than you, beyond the line of temperance.

Thirdly, it is said that the constitutions and habits of men differ so much that no rules of diet can be formed that will generally apply.

This is one of the most common resorts of those, who cannot practice self-denial enough to adopt salutary rules as to eating. Your rules will never answer for me, is the excuse: my constitution differs so much from yours, that I must consult my own experience. If you can sustain your health and strength on a scanty allowance, I have no objections; but a thorough trial shows me that I must use food of a more stimulating and nourishing kind and in larger quantity or I should sink.

This is the same apology that the moderate drinker of ardent spirits employs to sustain his practice. His constitution he thinks requires a little of the stimulus. But what evidence has he that this is true? Why, he has omitted for a day or two to use spirit, and feels the sinking sensation which always attends the omission of any unnatural stimulus; and it is too dreadful to endure. He knows that a single draft would relieve it; and hence hastily infers, that it is necessary; without prolonging the trial until nature accommodates herself to the new mode of living. Just so the reduction of the usual quantity and variety of food, produces a transient, and it may be a very uncomfortable loss of strength and spirits: and hence the experimenter infers, what he ardently hopes would prove true, that his peculiar constitution exempts him from dietetic rules. There is, indeed, considerable diversity of constitution among men. But they are prone to magnify this difference. For every fair experiment shows that all the important rules of diet are applicable to nearly every constitution. As to minor differences, which are undoubtedly numerous, every reasonable system of rules makes allowance for them. Thus, if one man requires a somewhat greater amount of food than others, no uncomfortable effects will follow his reception of it. Or if his habits demand this or that article of food, or a variety of dishes, he has full liberty to humour his appetite, provided only that he do it at different meals. Or if you find it best to partake of food only twice each day, or three or four times, the rules that have been laid down, do not forbid him. What greater latitude than this, can any reasonable man demand, for the peculiarities of his constitution?

Fourthly: Some apologize for excesses at the table by maintaining that there is so radical a disagreement among dietetic writers that they cannot be followed. This opinion must arise either from an imperfect acquaintance with such writers, or from a strong predisposition to find them at variance, or from mistaking minor differences for those that are essential, or from regarding a few anomalous authors, who write for the support of some favorite hypothesis, as of equivalent authority with the great majority, to whom no sinister or prejudicial motives can be imputed with justice. Judge of the principles of any science, not absolutely demonstrative, by such an erroneous standard, and the most contradictory statements could be made. Whereas, by comparing together those authors whose information, talents and experience, give them the best claims to credence, they would be found in all essential points in harmony. On the subject of diet, among the immense numbers of writers that have in every age appeared, it would be strange if some variety of opinion might not be found. But let the most judicious, the most experienced, and the best informed, be compared together in there is found as close an agreement on fundamentals, as exists in any of the medical, intellectual, or moral sciences.

Fifthly: it is often found that the poorest classes in society are more unhealthy than the rich and that the average duration of life is longer among the latter than the former. And since the rich so generally indulge in excess of food, and the poor are compelled to be severely temperate, it is inferred that a super abundance of nourishment is far less detrimental than a deficiency. But this inference is found on the supposition, that the difference in diet is the sole cause of the difference in health and longevity. It

leaves out of the account all those exposures to the inclemencies of the weather, excessive exertion, uncomfortable lodgings, and deficient clothing, which are the lot of the poor: but against which the wealthy are secured. Nor can it be allowed that the poor come much nearer to a proper observance of the rules of diet, than the rich. For their food, although coarse, is yet often most unhealthy in its nature, or miserably prepared. And besides, how few of them have the prudence to lay any restraint upon an appetite rendered ravenous by privation, when an abundance is set before them. They thus violate some of the most important rules of health, viz. regularity and uniformity. Although, therefore, the dietetic excesses of the affluent deeply affect the health in shorten life, yet the numerous causes, operating injuriously upon the poor, are often still more powerful.

Sixthly: it is said, that those who adhere to exact rules of diet, are generally men of feeble health, and withered muscle: while multitudes, who never heard of any rule but to follow nature, are of full and vigorous muscle, and long lived. Hence, these rules are of no value: or rather, their observance tends often to enfeeble the constitution, and to bring on imaginary, if not real, diseases.

It is, alas, too true, that most of those who are strictly temperate, are lean and feeble. For very few can be persuaded to observe the rules of health, till their constitutions are broken down, and the grave begins to yawn before them. If in such cases they can lengthen out life with tolerable comfort, it must be regarded as a powerful testimony in favor of dietetic rules. And if they can by this means prop up even a deeply shattered system for a long time, what might not their observance accomplish, for one of undiminished stamina? But such rarely feel the need of special attention to health; and man, seeing only the feeble, in general, advocates for dietetic observances, very reasonably infer that their effort is rather to enfeeble than to strengthen and to render men needlessly particular in respect to modes of living. Hence arises a prejudice against all rules on the subject; and they believe, what appetite is very ready to persuade them is true, that he who thinks the least about the quantity and quality of his food, is most likely to enjoy health attain long life.

The vigorous health and longevity of some intemperate men, has long been regarded as a triumphant argument in favor of the use of ardent spirits. But the friends of temperance regard it as a sufficient answer, to say, the peculiarities of constitution, or of occupation, operating as an antidote to the poisonous influence of alcohol, may, in a few cases, produce an exception to the general rule, that ardent spirit injures the health and shortens life. The same reply is equally conclusive in respect to the injurious effect of intemperance in food. Though probably longevity is more rare among great eaters, than among the moderately intemperate in drinking. The rosy countenance and full muscle of the free liver, which present to most minds an enviable picture of health, are often looked upon by the physician, only as a premonition of early prostration, or death.

Seventhly: a reduction of usual quantity, or variety, of food, is said by some to produce only faintness, languor, and weakness; and is, therefore, injurious.

This is the apology of many for returning to a course of full living after a few imperfect and ill directed efforts to practice temperance. Failing health, or the reproofs of conscience, excite them to make a change in their luxurious modes of living. But all the while, appetite loudly remonstrates against any encroachment upon its liberties; and calls to its aid all the physical powers that have become morbid and perverted by indulgence. All these have been accustomed so long to rich and stimulating nourishment, that they sink when deprived of the usual excitement. They have been goaded into excessive action by unnatural and inordinate impulses; and now, the more moderate, though less irregular, force of temperance, seems for a time insufficient to keep the wheels of life in motion. It is

exactly the same sense of sinking and weakness that the drunkard feels when you take from him ardent spirit. But will these horrid feelings continue? Certainly not: for ere long the functions of the system will become natural; and the organs will perform their appropriate work in a more equable and less violent manner, and returning health, and strength, and happiness, will be the result. For a long long time, indeed, the system may feel the effects of such a furious motion of its wheels. But many a reformed drunkard and glutton have found that the constitution possesses a wonderful power of restoring the exhausted and almost ruined organs, provided only that the prescriptions of temperance be observed. Let then everyone attempting a reformation in his dietetic habits remember the true cause of his debility and morbid feeling; and that they will gradually vanish, so soon as the system is restored to its natural state. He must expect a severe conflict for a time: but if, like Paul, *he keep under his body and bring it into subjection*, the victory will be glorious and happy.

Eighthly, it is said that the system of diet for which I contend, if its principles be fairly carried out, will reduce us all to bread and water. For if the more simply, and with the less stimulus, life is supported, the better; bread and water will be the best diet; since they are the simplest and least stimulating of all kinds of food.

Suppose this inference to be correct, and that the system of diet that has been explained, should place bread and water at the head of its list of food and drink. Suppose these articles alone to be sufficient for health and strength. Would such a diet be so meager and narrow as to be intolerable? Let those who think so, consult the old testament; and they will find that bread; that is, farinaceous articles of some kind, constituted the principal food, and water the principal drink, of many of the best and happiest of men: nay, that this was the most common diet of early times. It was unleavened bread, with which Lot entertained the angels that led him out of Sodom. It was the temptation which a meal of bread and water presented to one of the prophets in the days of Jeroboam, that led him to hearken to the solicitations of an aging brother prophet, in defiance of the command of God, and upon the peril of his life to sit down at his frugal board. It was *a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water*, that enabled Elijah to *arise and go in the strength of that meat, forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of God*. What was it but bread and water, that God gave the children of Israel during their 40 years residence wandering in the wilderness? God thought this the best diet for them. But they, accustomed to the richer and more stimulating nourishment of Egypt, thought otherwise; and exclaimed, *Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely! The cucumbers and the leaks and the onions and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes. Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?* How precisely do these complaints correspond with the objections urged at this day, against an abstemious diet. Let those who urge them recollect what was the effect of permitting the Israelites to return to their free living and more stimulating food. *So they did eat and were filled: for he gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust: but while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them and smote down the chosen men of Israel*. It was not probably necessary for God to employ a miracle to accomplish this destruction: for in that hot climate, he had only to permit those deluded men to feast upon the quails sent among them, and pestilence and death would follow in terrible power. Even the wild Arab has learnt that the most rigid temperance can alone preserve him amid the heats of his cheerless deserts; and so he frequently limits himself to water and *a piece of dried black bread, without any other kind of nourishment*.

Despicable as a diet of bread and water is thought to be, it has not unfrequently proved the salvation of the invalid and luxurious. Several cases of the most authentic kind are on record, in which men from higher classes in society, have been confined in prison for years on a diet of bread and water; and were



thus recovered from a variety of distressing complaints, brought on by the use of too much and too stimulating food. Others, by adopting this diet, when apparently on the brink of the grave, have arrested the progress of disease, and prolonged a useful and happy existence for years. And such men have testified that even this scanty diet was more highly relished, and therefore more luxurious fare. Indeed, it may be stated as a general principle, that that diet, however simple, which is the most promotive of health, is the most uniformly and permanently agreeable to the pallet.

In such cases as have been mentioned, then, diet confined exclusively to bread and water is by no means to be despised. Indeed, God, by furnishing it to the Israelites in the desert, has given a most decided testimony to its sufficiency and value, at least in similar cases. And has he not afforded a like testimony, in so abundantly providing these two articles, all over the earth? But notwithstanding all this, the system of diet which I advocate does not by any legitimate inference, confine any, except perhaps the very feeble invalid, to a diet of this kind. For it allows every man to use that kind of food, and in that quantity, which will best promote permanent health and strength. And there is a great variety of other articles, even if one confines himself to vegetable food, which are no more, or very little more stimulating, than bread and water. These, the system recommends to be used at different meals. Nor does it discard the use of various kinds of meat for the healthy, and those subject to severe bodily labors. For in applying the principle that more simply, and with the less stimulus, life is supported the better, we are to take into consideration the exposure of the individual to bodily exertions, since it may be, that food, more nourishing and strengthening than bread alone, may be necessary to preserve his health and strength.

Ninthly: it is thought by many that this dietetic system is novel, and that it has never been fairly tested.

Such an opinion as this results from the same cause, as the impression existing at the time of the Reformation from Popery, that the evangelical doctrines were a novelty. It was not because those doctrines were not to be found in the bible; but because the bible had been neglected, and human tradition and authority substituted, during the dark ages. There has been a dark age in respect to temperance, and the shadows must still brood thick over that mind, which regards the essential principles of the system that has been advanced as unknown and unpracticed in former times. For who, that is conversant with ancient history, does not know that these doctrines and a correspondent practice, unperiled serenity and health, long life and happiness to a multitude of the ancient philosophers; and that hence it was, that many of the early Christians enjoyed so much in religion and did so much for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. And through every successive age, there have not failed, even the most licentious times, faithful witnesses, in their doctrine and practice, to the truth of the system. Indeed, it needs only that one should examine but a small part of the two thousand volumes upon health and longevity that are extant, to be convinced how numerous and respectable these witnesses have been in all ages.

Tenthly: it is objected to this system that so particular an attention to rules as it requires, will occupy much of a man's time, and thoughts.

This objection applies only to the commencement of living systematically. For very soon a man gets into the habit of observing certain rules, and afterwards he observes them without even thinking of them. The fact is more men observe some sort of rules in respect to diet: but having become habitual, they are not conscious of being guided by them. And just so will it prove, when a man has acquired the habit of living according to the system I advocate. He will follow its prescription without thinking of them at all; just as a man, after having made a change in his dress, thinks less and less about it, until at length it does

not occur to him what sort of a coat he has on, from morning to night. His stress may be so different from that worn by others, as to attract the attention of everyone he meets; and they suppose the man himself must be continually attentive to his costume. Just so, when men see an individual, whose dietetic habits are very different from their own, and quite temperate, they look upon him as exceedingly particular and imagine that he spends much of his time in attending to fastidious rules; whereas, if he has been temperate long enough to become habitually so, he thinks no more about his food and drink than he who indulges his appetite in an unrestrained manner: indeed, he thinks much less about what he shall eat and what he shall drink, than the man given to appetite. It is, in fact, as easy to observe dietetic rules, after a little time, than to live without them; and so far from interfering with other and more important concerns, it very much increases the power of executing other labours, both by the additional cleanness and strength which temperance inspires, and by the regularity which it is calculated to introduce into the whole manner of living. Every temperate man and is an early riser; and very few early risers are indolent. Good habits, like bad ones, usually cluster together.

The Eleventh Objection to the system, is, that its adoption would operate most perniciously upon the civilities, hospitalities, and happiness of social life. For when our friends, or the stranger, come under our roof, fatigue and depressed with heat and thirst, or chilled with cold and wet, it is water only, which according to this system, ought to be offered them. And it is a single dish only, of the plainest food that we are at liberty to place before them. Even when we invite our friends to the social entertainment, it is still water that must be their drink; and every thing like the rich variety, which our fathers thought no sin to offer their guests, must be excluded. Who is willing to be thought so niggardly? Who is willing thus to extinguish the animated glow of social intercourse, by removing from his table every luxury? It would give the social entertainment the gloom of the dungeon; and make the guests feel like prisoners in their chains, feeding on bread and water!

This objection is founded views altogether erroneous (which nevertheless are extensively prevalent) as to what constitutes genuine hospitality, and what is necessary for making social interviews the most profitable and agreeable. Genuine hospitality consists in offering to our friends and to the stranger, that falls in our way, that kind of refreshment which will most promote their happiness; not that which will please perverted appetite best, and afterwards oppress and derange the physical and intellectual system. Who appears most truly hospital, Abraham, bowing himself to the ground and saying to the three strangers, who are angels in disguise, on the plains of my Manure, *Let a little water be fetched and wash your feet; and I will fetch a morsel of bread and comfort ye your hearts;* for the lady of modern times who first presents her guests with adulterated wine or Spirit, then prepares for them tea, or coffee, excessively strong and stimulating, accompanied with varieties of foods that can hardly fail of oppressing the stomach; and urging them all upon her friends with an earnestness that would be becoming in a better cause? Is it hospitality, thus to tempt persons who feel fatigues, to overload their systems, and rouse up the organs to excessive exertion by stimulants and narcotics? Every man's conscience decides in favor of patriarchal hospitality, however his appetite may plead for modern indulgence.

It is a mistaken notion that simulating food and drink render social intercourse more agreeable and improving. The effect, indeed, of all unnatural excitement in the animal spirits, is unhappy upon such interviews. The man who uses water for drink, and plain simple food for nourishment, avoiding all the cake and pastry, and a whole list of the desert, will possess the best preparation, so far as diet is concerned, for being agreeable and entertaining in society. Long after the spirits of the wine bibber, and the tea and coffee drinker, after dashing and foaming among rocks and precipices, have settled down into a stagnant pool; his will be flowing on, clean, and unruffled, while those of these the man who has

indulged appetite to excess, will be smothered under the load with which his system is struggling. When men shall dispense with all unnecessary stimulants, social entertainments will become far happier and more useful scenes, than they now are: nor will the guests be compelled so often to remember these with the reproofs of conscience.

The twelfth objection to this system of diet, is, that men will never consent to relinquish all their luxuries and unnecessary indulgencies, even though it be known that they are injurious. And, therefore, it is useless to urge upon them a system so strict and unsparing. Whereas, by recommending a system which gives the appetite some slight indulgences, beyond what strength and health demand, man might easily be persuaded to adopt it. And it is certainly better to gain some disciples by such a compromise, than to disgust everybody by an ascetic and utopian scheme.

Whether the essential principles of the system of diet under consideration, will ever be universally or even generally adopted I know not. But my belief is, that they must be adopted in order to the existence of that degree of happiness and holiness on earth, which the scriptures predict. Nor do I believe that the way to make men temperate, is to adapt rules to the demands of appetite or to make any compromise whatever, with it. But rather to make rules as perfect as possible; without any reference to what men will, or will not, do. For if you yield one point to disordered appetite, its cry will incessantly be give, give, until...

## Sermon 165 Parable of the Kings Marriage Supper for His Son

[Sermon No. 165, "Parable of the King's Marriage Supper for his Son," Matthew 22:1-14, 1823 May, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 12]

Matthew 22:1-14

A parable is a figurative representation of truth. By selecting some striking object in nature from the ordinary concerns of life which has a general resemblance in some leading points to the moral or religious truth intended to be taught a force is added to that truth which its naked presentation would not carry with it.

In a parable it is not necessary that there be a minute coincidence or analogy between the object or event described and the moral truth intended to be taught: neither is it necessary that every circumstance mentioned in the description should have something correspondent to it in the moral. A resemblance in some leading particulars is all that is essential and many things may be added by the speaker merely to give a richness and vividness to the description.

In the parable just read the kingdom of heaven is likened to a king making a marriage feast for his son. The only expression in the parable that requires any previous explanation in order to an easy understanding of it is the phrase *the kingdom of heaven*. This is used with considerable variety of meaning in different parts of the N. Testament. It does not always mean what its literal signification would suggest viz. the placing of the blessed in another world although this is frequently its signification. Sometimes it means the reign of heaven that is the reign or authority of God on earth in the times of the Messiah as it was foretold in the prophets he should reign. Or rather in such cases it means the Christian dispensation which is characterized by the reign of heavenly principles when God would specially manifest himself among men for their conversion and salvation. And again in some passages it evidently means the administration of heaven or God's method of governing and bringing subjects into the literal kingdom of heaven. This is its meaning unquestionably in the parable under consideration. The kingdom of heaven that is God's mode of administering his kingdom - his mode of introducing subjects into it is likened to a certain king which made a marriage for his Son, etc.

It will be my object in pursuing this subject at this time to exhibit the striking points of resemblance between the marriage feast described in the parable and the kingdom of heaven or God's introduction of subjects into it. And let it be remembered my brethren that the feast we are now celebrating is the established sign God has appointed for the visible distinction of those who are to be introduced into the heavenly kingdom - or rather this supper is a part of the mode by which God prepares men for heaven so that in fact it is proper to draw the comparison between the parable and this supper: and I shall have occasion to speak of this as well as the kingdom of heaven generally and you will hereby perceive that it will not be improper. This supper is as it were a representation of the Gospel feast to which the marriage feast of the King is likened.

The first thing that strikes us in the parable is the invitation of the king to a select number of guests and their refusal to comply with the invitation. It was an invitation to partake in a rich entertainment prepared at great expense and after this was made known to them after they were told that the oxen

and the fattings were killed and all things were ready it seemed strange that they should neglect so fine an opportunity of regaling their tastes on the rich dainties of a kingly banquet: and one would suppose even if they felt no inclination to attend the feast for the feast's sake yet that they would not refuse to render so small a tribute of respect to their sovereign as to go to it. And indeed they ought to have considered themselves specially honored by the invitation - since they the subjects were selected from others to witness the marriage ceremony. And still more strange does it appear that they should not only refuse the honor done them but should actually murder those set forth in an unoffending manner to call them in.

Yet all this conduct passing strange as it is has been acted over repeatedly in relation to the Gospel feast. Nations and individuals have been specially invited from the rest of the world to eat bread and drink wine in the kingdom of heaven: and with a blind and vile madness have not only scorned the invitation but have actually slain those who went forth thinking to set before them the attractions of the feast and to invite them to come in. The Jews were such a nation - and to exhibit their perversity was the grand object of the Saviour in framing this parable. God had chosen them out of all the nations under heaven to be his peculiar people and sent prophets and teachers innumerable to teach them their privileges and obligations and to invite them in the kindest manner to receive salvation. But as a nation they were utterly deaf to the invitation. Stephen in the moment of martyrdom said to them - *which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the comings of the just one, of whom ye have been now that betrayers and murderers.* Every heart feels the justice of that act of the king in the parable when his servants sent forth to invite the guests were slain. *When the king heard thereof he was wroth; and he set forth his armies and destroyed those murders and burned their city.* And this was intended by Christ as a prediction of the dreadful woes God would shortly visit on the Jewish nation for their inhuman harshness and murders of the faithful servants of Jehovah.

This part of the parable applies too to any nation peculiarly distinguished by favours from on high when they abuse them. Everyone who reads the history of the world knows that there has always been a vast difference in the outward privileges of nations and that for their abuse of them - many have had their names blotted from the list of nations. O my country remember how exalted are your privileges how loud the servants of God are calling you to the feast of the Gospel and tremble at the awful doom that awaits thee except thou repent.

This part of the parable applies too to particular churches and societies whom God has specially blessed. While millions have been left unenlightened these have received abundance of light and mercy. But alas too many have received them only to abuse them. Where are now the once flourishing churches of Smyrna and Ephesus Corinth and Philadelphia? Yet which of them was more highly blessed than we have been my brethren in this place. In the fate of Jerusalem and Smyrna I read the fate of this church and people if we continue to abuse the offers of mercy as we now abuse them.

This part of the parable applies also to individuals. Many in every place and every age are specially invited to the Gospel feast. They are born of Christian parents - they are nursed in the cradle and on the bosom of piety. They have line upon line and precept upon precept. From the earliest dawns of intellect they are instructed in the holy Scriptures - in the observance of the Sabbath - in the attendance upon the means of grace in the duty of prayer and in all other moral and religious duties. And more than all the special influences of the Holy Spirit are sent into their hearts - they are convinced of sin righteousness and judgment to come. They feel the reality of religion the importance of religion and their perishing need of religion. And yet - O tell it not in Gath publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon - and yet there they stop - no - they do not stop - they go like the guests that were bidden in the parable

the one to his farm and the other to his merchandise. They turn away from the pressing invitation to the gospel feast. They willfully resist the Spirit of God. They thus cast contempt on his honorable office. They prefer some worldly trifle to the riches of paradise - a few husks in this world to the marriage supper of the Lamb - a little short tired unsatisfactory imaginary pleasure in the world to the everlasting joys of heaven. O it is the world and some of its deceptive and alluring shapes - it is the lusts of the flesh the lusts of the eye - or the pride of life that causes so many to neglect the special calls of God to the feast of paradise. Hence it is that we have the melancholy spectacle exhibited before us to day that out of a population of 1700 souls no more than 200 come and surround the table of the Redeemer. Hence it is Christian husband that your wife comes not with you around this communion board. Hence it is Christian wife that your husband is separated from you at this holy supper. Hence it is Christian parent that your children over whom you have so long prayed refuse to sit down with you today to commemorate the dying love of your Saviour. And hence it is my brethren that so many of those who only a few months since had their attention called up to the concerns of their souls and seemed for time to have entered upon the strait and narrow way turn away from this holy ordinance and will not confess their Redeemer before them. Ah, how dreadful are the words of Christ in regard to those who have been specially invited and have refused. *The wedding is ready but they which were bidden were not worthy. I say unto you that none of these men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*

The second theory in the parable under consideration to which I would call your attention is that after the refusal of those who were specially invited a general invitation was given to all of every class and description. *Go ye therefore into the highways and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage.* In a parallel parable related by Luke so urgent was this general invitation to the feast that the servants were directed to compel those in the highways and hedges to come in.

And such also have been God's dealings in regard to the Gospel feast. When the Jews have rejected the offer of mercy so long granted them - when finally they crowned their works of iniquity not only by slaying the servants and messengers of the Lord but the Lord himself, then God in a more special manner proclaimed salvation to the Gentiles. Then a voice spoke in the ear of Peter the converted Jew, *What God hath cleansed call not thou common or unclean.* Then we who were the dwellers in the highways and hedges had the invitations to the Gospel feast circulated among us as wide as the rising from the setting sun and as far as infinite mercy could make them. The urgent message was limited to no class or description of men but came with a pressing earnestness to the high and low rich and poor learned and ignorant. A voice sounded in their ears, *No every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and he that hath no money come ye buy and eat yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price. The Spirit and the bride say come out and let him that heareth say come and let him that is athirst come and whosoever will let him come and take of the waters of life freely.*

And these invitations have not been without effect. *The wedding is furnished with guests.* Thousands and tens of thousands there are who have come into the visible church and sit down with Jesus at his table in his earthly courts. The word the preachers and the Spirit of God have not been sent forth in vain. They have compelled many to own their Redeemer and to throw away the weapons of rebellion - not compelled them by any physical compulsion - not by forming them to act contrary to inclinations: but compelled them by the overwhelming power of motives and arguments - the only compulsion God ever exercises over free agents.

But *when the king came in to see the guests assembled at the marriage of his son, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. Any he said friend who comest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.* And well he might be so: For he could not plead that he was

unable to procure a wedding garment. For in the eastern world it was customary on such occasions for the persons who made the marriage feast to furnish each one of the guests with an appropriate dress called the wedding garment. And this man was speechless because he had not even taken so much trouble as to exchange the filthy garments he wore in the highways and hedges thereby showing an utter disregard to the feelings of the king and a contempt of his regulations.

Would to God this were not a true emblem of the visible church of Christ! But Paul in his day found Diotrophes and Marmozeries [????] and many others sitting at the table of Christ without the garment of a Saviour's righteousness upon them or that clean and white linen the righteousness of the Saints. And can we hope then that no such hypocrites are to be found in later times when there is such a laxity of discipline and so much corruption and practice! Can we hope my brethren that we are all clothed today with the wedding garment? We have set down around the table of the Lord Jesus Christ and the king of glory has come in and is now going round among us and searching our hearts! And we may be deaf - but he is really addressing to us of freeing voice - and asking those of us who have never embraced him by a living faith - friend how comest thou in hither not have on a wedding garment. Mark how kind his language - he calls us friends - we who are betraying him with a kiss - we who have enmity to him in our hearts. We cannot plead that no garment was provided - or offered. The bible this house of God our faithful Christians friend all appear in evidence against us to testify that the righteousness of Christ has been offered to us and urged upon us and that the Spirit of God is given to those who ask him. No - if we are in reality not his friends we must be speechless and when he utters the dreadful sentence, *bind him hand and foot and take him away and cast him into outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth - our mouths will be stopped and we shall become guilty before God.*

There is another fact connected with these remarks which we learn from this parable. It is that *many are called but few are chosen*: that is many are called into the visible church and profess the religion of Jesus before men who are not chosen or elected of God and who will at last be found without the wedding garment. This is unquestionably the meaning of the verse: for Christ seems here to have dropped the parable and to be speaking concerning the truths it was intended to exhibit. And to my mind brethren there is something awfully solemn and alarming in that contrast between the word many and the word few - *many are called but few are chosen*. Many come around the table of the Lord on earth - yet only a few of these will sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven. And only a short time previously the Saviour had concluded another parable with this same alarming declaration. For alarming it certainly is. What if Christ had stood today in the midst of this church and exclaimed *many are called but few are chosen*! Should we not have felt our nerves creep and vibrate and our hearts shrink within us? Should we not be earnestly solicitous to make our own calling and election sure. But what right have we to apply this general expression to other churches rather than this? Has not Christ applied it to this as much as to any other? And can we can we my brethren rest any longer satisfied with doubtful evidences of our piety. While I would not discourage the humble Christian I cannot avoid urging myself and you brethren whenever we begin to relax in the path of duty to remember those appalling words *many and few*.

I shall advert to only one more point mentioned in the parable. It seems the marriage feast was sumptuous and alluring to the appetite. It was a board spread with kingly magnificence - containing all the luxuries to gratify the ear the eye and the palate which an eastern monarch could furnish. And it was all gratuitous too: the guests might enjoy it all *without money and without price*.

But how does all the splendid parade to gratify the senses sink into insignificance when we turn our eyes to the feast of the Gospel to which the lovers of God are admitted! The one is to gratify for a few hours

the body the other to feast the soul through eternity – the one contained the perishable meat and drink which could satisfy the appetite only for a short period - the other contained the bread of heaven and the water of life which proceeds from the throne of God. O Christian how rich - how alluring - how uncloying - is the banquet spread for you through the work of a Saviour! It is a feast of love - love to God love to the Redeemer love to mankind. The more you receive this heavenly food - the more you are capable of receiving and enjoying. It is your blessed lot to feast on the food of angels - to eat fruit of the tree of life and drink the water of the river of life.

*The banquet that you eat  
Is made of heavenly things  
Earth has no dainties half so sweet  
As your Redeemer brings.* [Source: Hymn by Isaac Watts]

And now my brethren around this table may we hope to receive some of these heavenly dainties if we come in faith. What is it that is here presented for our reception? The flesh of the Son of God! The blood of the Son of God! And except we eat this flesh and drink this blood we have no life in us. *Lord evermore give us this bread.* Who would exchange the sweets of this heavenly banquet for all the unsatisfying allurements of earth! Who that ever experienced it would not prefer one hour of communion with his God and Redeemer at this board for the united pleasures of hearing sight and taste which all the world could present. The meat which we here eat is such as the world knows not of – O the joy the delight of faith in a Saviour's blood! It is the beginning of heaven on earth. Every returning communion season is hailed by the believer as the time that faith shall take a firmer hold on God and he shall renew again the glorious covenant he has made with his God. Approach then Christian to participate in the sacred feast and let no earthly cares - no inferior joys enter into your souls in an hour so calm and tender and heavenly. Let God be all in all. Let Christ be all in all -

*Come and the Lord shall feed our souls  
With more substantial meat  
With such as saints in glory love  
With such as angels eat.* [Source: Hymn by Isaac Watts, 1709]

A little longer and we shall see one another with immortal eyes and love one another with immortal love - and our voices will be tuned to sing together the song of Moses and the Lamb. Every earthly feeling every cumbrous mortal clog will drop from us and these our burdened spirits will realize what we now see through a glass darkly – and the joys we now have a glimpse of around this sacred table will be consummated at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

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When the Saviour and his disciples had sung the everlasting hymn at the eve and he went forth into that scene of the bitterest suffering Gethsemane. And my brethren will you accompany him thither, or will you go forth into the ears and vanities and pleasures of the world and leave him there alone to endure his agonies. If he is personally beyond the reach of suffering yet his cause is in Gethsemane enduring the assaults of men and devils. Or will you follow him into the garden and there fall asleep? What cannot you watch one hour with his cause - cannot you watch one hour with Christ has prayed all night in the mountains for you? It will indeed be but an hour that we shall be called to watch. Our prayers are almost ended - our spiritual conflicts almost over - our efforts in favour of Christ near an end. And then if we



have been faithful O who can tell what glories await us - but if unfaithful who can tell how much deeper we shall be buried in perdition than the heathen.

Delivered

At Conway May 1823

At Conway May 1826

At Sunderland January 1<sup>st</sup> 1832

## Sermon 166 Future Punishments

[Sermon No. 166, "Future Punishments," Job 31:3, 1823 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 13]

Job 31:3

*Is not destruction to the wicked and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity.*

It is one of the delusions of the human heart when the wrath of God against sinners is described in a solemn and impressive manner to fancy that the preacher exaggerates the terrors of future torments. It is thought that he takes a kind of savage delight in holding before his hearers the terrors of hell - that he makes use of language which the scriptures will not warrant and that he does it merely to frighten men into a belief of his doctrines.

It is true indeed that improper language on this awful subject may be employed. But at the same time it is scarcely possible to use language more terrific more rousing more dreadful than the very words of scripture. And men object to the preaching of this character more because it renders their consciences uneasy than because it is not agreeable to the scriptures. For in fact nothing is more calculated to stir up man to action than to scroll before them in naked vividness the *strange punishment that awaits the workers of iniquity*. Our hearts are by nature so encased in sin so wrapped up in the seven plaited folds of iniquity that every common motive and argument and entreaty and persuasion make no impression. But there is something so awful in the terrors of the Lord that they will sometimes persuade men to enquire what they must do to be saved. The minister of Christ therefore ought to present them frequently and urgently before his people notwithstanding there are many who will endeavour to ridicule him as a preacher of terror and the like. But in consequence of this strong prejudice it is my object today to let the bible speak its own language without note or comment. I mean to present before you my hearers

First those scriptures that describe the wrath of God against sinners.

Secondly those passages that describe the duration of future punishment.

And thirdly those passages which deserve describe the characters of those who will endure the strange punishment of another world.

And I call upon every impenitent man to listen to my words but to my words but to the words of the living God. Let him remember the language I am about to repeat is the very language of God - and that whatever he has threatened he will execute up to the last jot and tittle.

Listen then in the first place to the threatenings of God against impenitent sinners. And as we hear them let us enquire whether anything more dreadful can be conceived of by the human mind.

I begin with the Old Testament. *Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, says Zophar, though he hide*

*it under his tongue. Though he spare it and forsake it not but keep it still within his mouth; yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. He hath swallowed down riches and he shall vomit them up again. God shall cast them out of his belly. When he is about to fill his belly God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him and shall rain it upon him while he is eating. He shall flee from the iron weapon and the bow of steel shall strike him through. It is drawn and cometh out of the body yea the glittering sword cometh out of his gall: terrors are upon him. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity and the earth shall rise up against him. This is the position of a wicked man from God and the heritage appropriated unto him by God. Have you not asked them that go by the way and do you not know their tokens that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. If I whet my glittering sword says God to the Israelites and my hand take hold on judgment I will render vengeance to mine enemies and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood and my sword shall devour flesh. For a fire is kindled in mine anger and shall burn unto the lowest hell and shall consume the earth with her increase and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischief upon them I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heat and with bitter destruction. God forgiveth the righteous says the Psalmist and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready, He hath prepared also for him the instruments of death: he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. Those thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself. But I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this ye that forget God lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou casteth them down into destruction. Now are they brought into desolation as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. Thy hand shall find out all thy enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger. The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath and the fire shall devour them. Because I have called and ye refused etc. The destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. And the strong shall be as iron and the making it as a spark and they shall both burn together and none shalt quench them. Woe to the crown of pride to the drunkard of Ephraim. Behold the Low hath a mighty and strong one which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot. Come near ye nations to hear; and hearken ye people: let the earth hear and all that is therein: the world and all that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations and is fury upon all their armies; he hath utterly destroyed them he hath delivered them to the slaughter. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved and the heavens shall roll together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth from the vine and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold it shall come down upon Idumea and upon the people of my curse to judgment. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. I will tread them in mine anger and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments and I will stain all my raiment. For Tophet is ordained of old: yea for the king it is prepared he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it. Therefore thus saith the Lord God. Behold my servants shall eat but ye shall be hungry: behold my servants shall drink but ye shall be thirsty: behold my servants shall rejoice but ye shall be ashamed. Behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart. But ye shall cry for sorrow of heart and shall howl for vexation of spirit. Wait ye upon me saith the Lord until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations that I may assemble the kingdom and pour upon them mine indignation even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. God is jealous and the Lord revengeth and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries and his reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm and the clouds*

*are the dust of his feet. The mountains quake at him, in the hills melt and the earth is formed is browened at his presence yet the world and all that dwell therein. We can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger his fury is poured out like fire and the rocks are thrown down by him. For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud yea and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. As the tares are gathered and burned in the fires so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do in iniquity. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and great gnashing of teeth. Bind him hand and foot and take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. After thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. What if God seeking to show his wrath and to make his power known endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath filled to destruction? The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth and cast it into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city and blood came out of the wine press even unto the horses' bridles by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. And out of (the mouth of the word of God) goeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And (they) said to the mountains and rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and pour the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand? And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Our God is a consuming fire. Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the of the living God. There was a certain rich man, etc. (Luke 16:14 to end).*

I proceed in the second place to point you to those passages to scripture which describe the desperation of future torments. And on this point a few texts will be sufficient since the only question is whether those torments will be limited or infinite in duration.

*He will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Then shall (the Judge) say unto them on the left hand depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. If thy foot offend thee cut it off. It is better for thee to enter half into life than having two feet to be cast into hell into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him. Whosoever speaketh up against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world neither in the world to come. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*

Such are the torments the scriptures declare to be coming on an ungodly world. But who are the particular characters that must suffer this? How shall we know whether we are the persons? Let the scriptures themselves as my third head answer these enquiries.

*Except a man be born of water and the Spirit says Christ he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Except ye repent ye shall all perish. He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned. Wo unto ye scribes and Pharisees hypocrites! Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell! The hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall fear his voice and shall come forth. They that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Then shall the king say unto them on the left hand depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was ahungred and you gave me no meat: I was thirsty and you gave me no drink: I was a stranger and you took me not in naked and you clothed me not; sick and in prison and you visited me not. Then shall they answer him saying Lord when saw we thee ahungred or athirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister unto thee. Then shall he answer them saying verily I say unto you inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these you did it not to me. But there were false prophets also among the people even as there shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon them selves swift destruction. Behold the the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, vainness, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and suchlike; of the which I tell you before as I have also told you in times past that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Be not deceived: neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminate nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. The fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.*

Such are the torments of perdition such their duration - such the character of those who will endure them as they are described in the holy scriptures. In presenting this alarming subject before you altogether in scripture language I had two objects in view. The first was as already mentioned to do away certain prejudices which exist very extensively among men against exhibitions of the subject in the ordinary way. I wish to convince men that their disgust which they feel when this awful subject is pressed home upon their consciences lies in reality against the bible representation of it rather than against the manner of any particular preacher. For now that the bible representation has been exhibited before you my hearers I appeal to your candor to say whether it is not as full of horror – whether it is not as alarming – whether it does not make you shudder as much as any description you ever heard of the torments of hell or the effects of God. Where can there be found more terrific and awakening figures of language invented than the contains on this subject? And do you not feel that some sort of disgust and uneasiness in hearing this sermon as you ever have done in hearing a sermon of an ordinary character. If you do remember that your disgust is with the subject itself and not with the preacher: for it is the pure word of God that you have heard today. If you are displeased therefore with the sermon remember that you are displeased with what God has said. I know not that my sermons on this awful subject have ever excited disgust among my hearers in this place. But I do know that if such disgust exists against this sermon that same disgust exists against the bible also: since the sermon is extracted from the word of God.

Another object I had in view in treating this subject in this manner is to awaken in Christians a deeper

solicitude for their impenitent children and friends. You believe all that he has been delivered to you at this time to be the word of the God who cannot lie - you have no doubt that every one of the tremendous threatenings I have recited will be executed up to the last jot and tittle upon the wicked - upon the unregenerate. You know that if your child dies impenitent he will certainly be trodden down in the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God. You believe firmly that he will lie with the devil and his angels in the lake of fire and brimstone - that there the undying worm will gnaw him and the unquenchable fire will consume him - that the blackness of darkness will cover him forever - that the sword of the Almighty will be red with his blood that everlasting destruction will be upon him that the arrows of the Almighty will pierce him through and through and that the smoke of his torments will rise up forever and ever. All this Christian parent you believe will come upon your child except he repents. Arouse then and do your duty by warning him by urging him by praying for him with strong crying and tears unto him that is able to save.

All about careless impenitent man! Do you believe that all the torments that have been placed before you in this discourse are coming upon you as certainly as tomorrow's sun will rise except you repent. How can you disbelieve it - for it is the very language of God who is this moment looking into your heart. And yet you live on securely in sin - secure though God is pointing his arrows at your heart - secure though you hang suspended by a single hair over the weeping and the wailing of hell - secure though the flames of hell are already flashing in your face and the wrath of God is blowing them up into a seven fold heat. But your security your carelessness will soon be gone - yet oh not until it is forever too late unless the Spirit of God overcome your scepticism and break down your obstinate will.

Delivered

At Conway April 1823

## Sermon 170 Perpetuity of the Sabbath

[Sermon No. 170, "Perpetuity of the Sabbath," Numbers 15:32-36, 1823 May, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 13]

Numbers 15:32-36

*And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, the man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp and stoned him with stones and he died: as the Lord commanded Moses.*

This is an awful instance of the punishment of a Sabbath breaker. After the plain and repeated command by God to the Israelites to observe strictly that day to violate it was a presumption. It was deliberately trampling under foot a law of God and setting at naught (his authority) the character of God. And Moses introduces the text as a striking case of the punishment of such sins. *The soul that doeth aught presumptuously says the same reproacheth the Lord and that soul shall be cut off from his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord and hath broken his commandment that soul shall utterly be cut off.* Then he introduced the text as a practical comment on the law - as a solemn warning to others.

The object for which this man gathered the sticks was probably to prepare food. And although this would hardly in these days be called a violation of the Sabbath yet there was an express law repeatedly announced among the Jews forbidding them to perform any servile labour on that day and the penalty thereof was death. *Six days shall work be done, says Moses, but on the seventh day then shall be to you a holy day - a sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.* The man who gathered sticks was put in keeping therefore not because it was not decided that he must be put to death: but merely to determine the manner of his death this point being left undecided in the land.

This law punishing with death the least violation of the Sabbath and the melancholy instance recorded in the text have in them something which at first sight appears to us unnecessarily strict and severe. But God has a perfect right to enjoin just such positive precepts upon a particular nation or upon all men as he sees fit and we are bound to submit to the decisions of infinite wisdom guided by infinite love. But in reading on such a law several important enquiries suggests themselves. Is this law now in force? or was it confined to the Jewish nation and abrogated at the coming of Christ? If it is in force now why is it universally neglected? If it is not in force then are any of the commands in the Old Testament relating to the observance of the Sabbath binding upon all men? And if any of them are so how shall we know which are still in force? And if none of the commands in the Old Testament relating to the Sabbath are binding upon all men then where is there to be found in the whole bible any directions for the observance of the Christian Sabbath. To give an answer to these enquiries will be my object in the further consideration of this subject. And I shall endeavour to prove that all those precepts in the Old Testament relating to the Sabbath which are of a moral character or which from the connection were

obviously intended for the whole human family are still in force wherever the bible is known and that those commandments directed immediately to the Jews as mere positive precepts have been abrogated and are not binding upon men at the present day.

That there is a great difference between moral and positive precepts cannot reasonably be doubted. Positive precepts or instituted appointments are not in the least binding until they are promulgated - and unless their observance be required by God would never become a duty. But moral precepts are such as commend themselves to the consciences of all enlightened holy men and the obligation to obey them is immutable and eternal. That obligation also is universal except in regard to those duties which some are not called to perform because they do not sustain certain relations - as for instance the duty of a parent to child is not required of those who are not parents. Therefore there may be cases in which it is difficult to say whether a precept is moral or positive yet in most cases an obvious distinction exists between them and it is important that this be recollected - since it is believed that some of the commands in the bible concerning the Sabbath are moral and some positive.

I assert that the general precept appointing a sabbath to be observed is of a moral nature. In the second chapter of Genesis we are told that *on the seventh day God ended his works which he has made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had noted from all his work which created and made.* At the time the sabbath was thus instituted no human beings but our first parents were in existence: and hence it must have been instituted for them and all their posterity. For it is not possible to suppose it applicable only to a particular nation that should descend from them as the Jews for instance - since the terms are general and cannot be limited. And besides the reason here given for this institution is of a moral nature and as applicable to Gentile as to Jew - viz. to commemorate by the Sabbath the completion of God's work of creation. If it was important that any of the human race should be reminded of this it was equally important that all should be called to contemplate the wisdom and goodness of God in the production out of nothing of so beautiful universe.

And here let it be more distinctly remarked that it is most obviously a duty binding all men in every condition to set apart a certain portion of their time to the worship and service of Jehovah. This is demanded by his character by his providence and by man's exposed and dependant situation on earth. A service of this kind is most evidently a moral service and the precept required a moral precept. And to perform his duty in the best manner is as much of a moral service as to perform it at all. But as it is a social service - one in which all are to unite it is important that the particular day be appointed by God since men would disagree as to the time of keeping the Sabbath were it left to their determination.

And here it may be remarked that all the objects for which the Sabbath was instituted are equally applicable to all mankind. It was instituted that an opportunity might be furnished to man to commemorate the wisdom and power and goodness of God in the natural creation to give men an opportunity of resting from worldly toils and cares - to furnish an opportunity for acquiring and increasing in holiness and of preparing for an eternal sabbath in heaven. There is no reason therefore for supposing the command to sanctify the Sabbath to be limited to any individual or nation. Nor do the scriptures furnish any grounds for such a limitation. Nay on the other hand they contain correlative evidence that the observance of the Sabbath is universally binding on all men.

I already adduced the original institution of this rest for the proof of this and I now refer to another decisive passage in Exodus. It is the fourth commandment, *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor*



*thy cattle nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.* Now the question occurs was the command intended for the Jews only or for all mankind? For all mankind I answer. For the reason annexed to it is equally applicable to all men and is the same that is annexed to the original institution of the sabbath as given in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter of Genesis – viz. that the seventh day was blessed because God rested in it from his work of creation and therefore hallowed it. And again this command is a part of what has ever been considered the moral law in distinction from the ceremonial law. It was placed in the midst of the ten commandments twice in the old testament viz. in the text and in the 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Deuteronomy. Those ten commandments you will remember were delivered amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai. God wrote them twice upon a tablet of stone and uttered them in an audible voice but all the other laws delivered to the Jews were written in a book and thus a peculiar importance was attached to those engraved on stone. In conformity to this promulgation Christ when on earth although he abolished the Jewish ceremonial law distinctly recognized the ten commandments as containing a summary of all the requirements of a moral nature God demands of man and as binding on all the race. He comprehends the whole indeed under the two general heads viz. love to God and love to man yet does not therefore in so many words mention the fourth commandment: yet if we have a right to leave out this we have a right to omit several others which all acknowledge to be obligatory. And if the command respecting the Sabbath was not interest intended to be binding on all men why was it delivered with so much solemnity - why was it twice inserted in the midst of the other moral commandments and why was it written by the finger of God and why was not some intimation been given that it was a mere positive precept intended for the Jews only and not for the Gentiles?

The truth is the command to observe the Sabbath is a really a moral precept as any other in the decalogue. Some particulars indeed in that command may be considered positive such as forbidding men to do any work themselves on that day or to permit any of their families or the stranger in their dwelling or their cattle to do any - and also the fixing the Sabbath as the seventh day of the week. And these things are positive precepts not binding until disclosed in liable to be done away by the subsequent command of God. But they are so connected with the moral part of the precept that if the latter be received as obligatory upon all the former must be regarded so too - until God please to alter it.

There are other commands and allusions concerning the sabbath in different parts of the Old Testament: some of which are of a moral character altogether and therefore ought to be regarded as obligatory upon all men, and others are of a positive character altogether and were intended entirely for the Jews. Of the former kind is that passage in Isaiah, *if thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight the holy of the Lord honorable and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways nor finding thine own pleasures nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, etc.* This direction being wholly of a moral character is applicable to us as well as the Jews. But the law which punishes with death every violator of the Sabbath and forbids the building of a fire on that day is a positive precept applicable only to the chosen people of God. Of course it must be regarded as abolished like the other ceremonial laws of the Jews - as being no longer obligatory. For neither Christ nor his apostles have made any recognition of these laws and therefore we have no authority for observing them since we do know that they have abolished in general terms the other peculiar and ceremonial laws of the Israelites.

It is very obvious then that a part of the law contained in the Old Testament relating to the Sabbath are obligatory upon all men and were intended for all men and that a part of them are abrogated by the

coming of the Messiah whose vicarious sacrifice rendered the ceremonial law unnecessary. Those laws relating to the Sabbath which are connected with this ceremonial law and have not been recognized by any of the subsequent sacred writers no longer have any force - while those of a moral nature - those which from the unlimited expressions in which they are couched were evidently not intended for a particular fading dispensation and also those few of a positive character so intimately connected with these as not to admit of a separation (of which however I know of none except those in the fourth commandment) all these were meant to be of universal and perpetual obligation and for our observance or neglect of them we as well as the Jews must give an account.

A very sweeping obligation however and one which often perplexes men is urged against our obligation to keep any laws that respected the Jewish Sabbath. It is this: that their sabbath was on the seventh day of the week and the Christian sabbath happens on the first day of the week and therefore any laws in relation to the former will not apply to the latter.

It will help to remove this difficulty to point you my hearers to a distinction that is made in the bible but not generally noticed between the holy sabbath and the day of the week on which the sabbath is kept. The original meaning of the term sabbath is a season of rest or cessation from labour. And it is obvious therefore that the sabbath has no necessary connection with any particular day unless God declares that a particular day shall be the sabbath. He may appoint the first or the last day of the week or any other day or two or three or four days in the week or only a part of a day to be observed as the sabbath and yet the general rules he has appointed for the sanctification of the sabbath would be the same in relation to whatever day he shall in his wisdom select. Nay more he can appoint one day say that last day of the week to be set apart as the sabbath for thousands of years and then change the day say to the first day of the week and still the laws concerning the sabbath will remain the same and apply alike to both days. And this is precisely what we suppose and believe God has done. We believe that for 4000 years the seventh day of the week was the sabbath day among the Jews but after the coming of Christ the sabbath was changed to the first day of the week in order to commemorate the resurrection of Christ as a work of equal importance with to say the least with the creation of the world. The many arguments that go to prove that such a change in the day of the sabbath has been made cannot be here presented. But if such change be allowed to be possible the object arrived at in this discourse will be attained viz. to prove that all those laws of a moral character in relation to the Jewish sabbath may apply with equal force to the Christian sabbath.

The distinction between the sabbath and the day of sabbath is evidently made in the fourth commandment. Its language is - *the seventh day is the sabbath of Lord thy God - the Lord rested the seventh day - wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.* It is curious that the blessing is here said to rest on the sabbath day and not on the seventh day - thus conveying an intimation that this day would not always continue to be the sabbath.

It appears then that the fourth commandment and all others of a like character in the Old Testament are obligatory upon us and that by them we shall be judged at the bar of God. Let us then in conclusion of the subject look back upon our past sabbaths and compare the manner in which we have kept them with those commandments. The sum and substance of them all is that we are bound to consecrate the sabbath exclusively to the service of God and to have nothing to do with worldly thoughts feelings or actions any further than necessity or mercy requires - any farther than we can thereby promote the glory of God. Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy - that is to devote it to God to set apart to Him and to regard all mixing of worldly concerns as utterly improper and a violation of the law of God. And now what is the testimony of conscience is in regard to our past conduct? I ask the man who has spent

many of his sabbaths in strolling about the fields or in visiting his neighbors I ask him whether he feels satisfied that he has kept the sabbath holy to the Lord? I ask the person who has spent a portion of his sabbaths in the perusal of books which have no reference to religion whether he has not violated the fourth commandment? I ask the man who has neglected to attend the public worship of God for a reason that would not have prevented him from doing as much to advance his worldly interests. I ask him whether the prospect of the coming judgment does not alarm him? (I ask him who devotes the holy sabbath to unnecessary journeys or the posting of books or the writing of letters if he can read without blushing the fourth commandment?) I ask those who do not hesitate on the Lord's day to converse upon affairs that have no relation to religion such as political literary or scientific subjects - the state of crops - the prices at market - and all the little unimportant worldly concerns of his neighbours. I ask them solemnly whether they do not think their own thoughts and speak their own words and do their own pleasure on the sabbath although God has commanded that they shall not do it upon the peril of their eternal interests and he will assuredly bring them into judgment for it. I ask those who spend more of the sabbath in sleep or in meditating (literally and merely intellectually pursuits) upon the farm the money or the merchandise. I ask those who rise early on Saturday mornings to pursue their worldly concerns but dose away the sweet and delightful hours of sabbath morning. I ask those who come into this house of God to meet their companions only to devise parties of visiting and pleasure and who defile the sanctuary of God by their irreverential conduct - I ask all such to pause and enquire what answer they have to give at the day of judgment when God will demand of them a solemn account of their violations of his holy sabbath.

My hearers this subject might easily be swelled to a volume. For sabbath breaking in some form or another is one of the most crying sins of these days. Men have learnt the art of violating the fourth commandment and yet fancying that they do not violate it. It is high time that we set down in our closets and examine that commandment and compare with it our conduct in days past. We tremble at the fate of the man who gathered sticks on the sabbath but let us remember that a more dreadful fate awaits us if we willfully violate the holy day which the Lord hath made. We lose our immortal souls. If we choose the society and join the band of sabbath breakers on earth we shall have them for our companions in a world where the light of the sabbath never yet descended. *In that lone land of deep despair, etc.*

Delivered

At Conway May 1823

At Amherst College July 1833

## Sermon 171 Concert in Benevolent Efforts

[Sermon No. 171, "Concert in Benevolent Efforts," Isaiah 41:6-7, 1823 Jun, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 13]

Isaiah 41:6-7

*They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheneth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, it is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.*

*[Includes comments on the Roman Catholic Church.]*

To no sentiment of inspiration does experience bear more ample testimony than the declaration of Christ that *the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*. Men display a sagacity a providence and a prudence in worldly affairs far superior to what they exercise in the concerns of religion. Were they not wiser in regard to things seen and temporal than they are concerning things unseen and eternal two thirds of the race would be beggars and starve.

It might be supposed however though a careless impenitent man might exercise a keener discernment in regard to the farm the money and the merchandise than in relation to his souls concerns yet when once men are brought to embrace a Saviour that same discernment will be brought to bear in all its former energy upon the subject of religion. But alas! There is so much of an earthly relish and so much of a downward tendency still clinging to Christians that it serves to keep them blinded in a measure to the glories of religion - while their eyes are wide open still and their vision unclouded when they look upon the world. The children of this world and that is irreligious men are wiser in their generation than the children of light that is real Christians. So that even man in the most favourable circumstances a superior providence and sagacity rests with the men of the world.

Why then my hearers may not Christians learn wisdom from the world. Is a principle of great use to the military man to be taught his enemies. That is he watches the plans and movements of his enemy and where he perceives them superior to his own he adopts them with an entirely different object in view. And so may the Christian seize upon the plans the enemies of religion employ and convert them into instruments of its defense. This lesson is indeed one of the great secrets of the exertions of the present day in the cause of benevolence.

Among the things that have always been understood by the enemies of religion than its friends is the principle that a vast accession of powers is obtained by united or associated effort over individual and unconnected exertions. It might at first sight seem as if the advantage gained by the formation of societies for the prevention of a particular object would be only in a direct proportion to the numbers united. That is two would only double the effect three treble it and so on. But the truth is the power gained is in a proportion vastly greater than this. An individual might be really disposed to promote a particular object and yet have a very low standard by which to regulate his exertions. But when brought to act with his brethren he would find others who had adopted a higher standard and then the principle of emulation comes in with all his force to increase his efforts. And besides this there is all the

excitement which results from mutual encouragement. We may be convinced that the object we are pursuing alone is a worthy one: but when our brethren join us in promoting it and additional strength is given to our convictions of its importance since it strikes others perhaps our superiors as it does us. And then we may be perhaps too much of a hesitating calculating temperament: and by uniting with others whose feeling are more warm and disinterested their exhortation and example may melt some of the ice in our bosoms - and cause the streams of benevolence to flow in richest abundance.

From these and other circumstances it results that associated or combined estimation exceed individual effort not simply in authoritative proportion to the numbers but in a arithmetical proportion to the numbers but in a geometrical ratio: so that often one member of the society shall do more for an object than five or more unconnected individuals of the same means. And not only so but there are a great variety of instances in which individual exertion would be utterly unavailing not being alone able to overcome powerful instructions which would give way in a moment before associated effort.

This principle of the rapid accumulation of power by the union of individuals although it has but recently been applied externally to the propagation of true religion has nevertheless been always understood and acted upon by men in their worldly enterprises -by the enemies of Christianity and the promoters of false religion. I shall in the first place recall to your remembrance some instances in which men have employed the principal to advance the interests of false religion.

The text is one of these cases. The prophet had just alluded to the efforts God had made for the advancement of his kingdom in the earth and the success that accompanied the exertions of his servants. This success excited the apprehension of the heathen lest their idolatries were about to fall before the worship of Jehovah. *The isles saw it and feared: the ends of the earth were afraid drew near and came.* And what should be done to support their sinking cause and check the progress of truth. They resort almost involuntarily to the principle of associated efforts. *They helped every one won his neighbour and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil saying it is ready for the soldering and he fastened it with nails that it should not be moved.* They struck upon the very best method human wisdom could derive for reviving and supporting idolatry. Their mutual exhortations served to confirm their confidence in those idols and to dissipate every desponding fear and doubt. And by engaging in the same works with their hands they could multiply still more the number of idol since if the carpenter took one part of the work and the goldsmith another any the blacksmith another they could acquire greater expertness and dexterity in the art. In short so excellent was the plan they adopted that had not God been their adversary their efforts would doubtless have been crowned with success.

The case of the Ephesian idolaters strivings to support the character of their goddess Diana is so similar to this that it ought here to be mentioned. They resorted to the same principle of united effort. *The word of God we are told grew mightily and prevailed* in Ephesus and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified: and when the idolatrous leaders saw that their craft was in danger they made an inflammatory address to the populace and excited them *to cry for the space of two hours great is Diana of the Ephesians.* A fine argument truly and yet it was the only one that would avail. By thus exciting an unity of feeling they produced an unity of action and became in fact an associated body and banded against the cause of Christ.

*[The following paragraph is marked with an asterisk; see tenth paragraph below for a possible insertion point]*

We are reminded in this place of those *more than forty men who banded together and bound themselves under a curse saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul*. They saw that their traditional corruptions of the Gospel were in danger from the success of the Gospel and though one man might have shrunk from the horrid act of assassination yet forty crying out to one another *brother be of good courage* would present phalanx which neither fear nor conscience nor anything else but the power of God could break. It is curious to observe how the children of this world as the Saviour calls them fly intuitively as it were to associated or combined efforts whenever they would oppose the truth or propagate error.

A remarkable instance of success in the propagation of a corrupt Gospel is found in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. You all know how this immense fabric was gradually extended from east to west and from north to south until it rested on the four quarters of the world. While with one hand she was busy in bending the necks of European sovereigns to her sway with the other she sent forth her learned and cunning emissaries into every corner of the earth: who carrying with them a gospel which flattered the carnal propensities and required no submission of the heart and moreover blending political with religious exertions were successful beyond calculation in multiplying nominal converts to Christianity. The little remnant of unadulterated religion that was found on earth was buried by overpowering deluge of corruption and paganism and mahometanism and all other false religions easily blended themselves with the Roman Catholic and formed what John emphatically calls the *beast with seven heads and ten horns after which all the world wondered*.

And what was the grand secret of such unexampled success? The nature of the system of religion this church proposed to her converts was inviting no doubt to the corrupt heart. But it must have demanded the most powerful systematic exertions to effect so great a change all over the earth. And the key to that system is to be seen in the institution of religious orders. These were associations of monastic men whose habits whose aims whose feelings and actions were the same. Under the mask of piety they became rich and learned and ambitious. And these were the men linked together by the strongest ties unto the church of Rome by the powerful attachments of self interest these were the men who penetrated within indefatigable industry into the sandy deserts of Africa the wilds of America and the snows of Asia and their extended the power and the influence of the Roman Pontiff. Who has not read of the deeds of the Knights Templars the Teutonic knights the knights of Malta and Jerusalem - the Benedictine monks the Augustines the Carthusians the Dominicans and the Jesuits - men whose exploits occupy so much of the page of history. Especially will the latter always be remembered for their unceasing activity - their learning and still more for the corruption of their principles too gross even for the popes to endure.

I proceed secondly to recall to your remembrance some prominent instances in which the principle of associated exertion has been successfully acted upon by men in their worldly concerns.

In this place I might refer to the very foundation on which society rests as illustrative of the subject. For in every page of the history and origin of society this principle exhibits itself. Indeed take it away and you annihilate society at once. But I shall not particularize at this time - I only refer to a few prominent facts which strike the mind more forcibly.

To the support and progress of literature and science it has for many centuries been regarded important and almost essential that those interested and qualified should form societies. An almost innumerable catalog of these might be mentioned: but is unnecessary. Suffice it to say that they have proved some of

the most powerful instruments ever put in operation for eliciting the resources of genius and concentrating individual efforts. The Royal Society of London for instance which has existed more than 150 years has published more than 100 quarto vols. of their transactions full of able original and interesting communications.

Those acquainted with commercial and manufacturing establishments know that associated effort lies at the foundation of the systems. Difficulties lie in the way of such pursuits which would bid defiance to individual exertions but which vanished before a mighty society marching forward to triumph with that most powerful of all weapons - money. In large places especially in European cities it is a practice of those of the same art or profession to form themselves into companies incorporated by law for holding property and devising measures for the interest of their several professions. An idea of their number may be obtained by recollecting that in the city of London more than ninety such fraternities are established.

Commercial companies have been established in great numbers on a much larger scale. Suffice it to mention the East India Company - to whom is granted the exclusive right of track to certain parts of the eastern world. It numbers more than 2000 merchants has an annual revenue of nearly 60 millions of dollars to which the expenses are about equal.

These facts are enough to show us how much is dependant in worldly concerns upon the principle of establishing societies – and it shows us also how sagacious men are to discover the best methods of husbanding affairs that are seen and temporal. Men of the world we thank you for the valuable lesson you have taught us which we are able to apply to the extension of religion.

In the third place I would recall to your remembrance some instances in which the enemies of religion have acted on the same principle.

And hear the case of the Saviour immediately recurs to us. We read often of the different classes of Jews although hostile to one another still taking counsel together to betray him and destroy him. There were frequent opportunities for individuals to attempt the murderous work but an individual unsupported by the acclamations of his comrades - courage other would have shrunk from the deed of betraying innocent blood. Even Judas required a band of soldiers to keep him in countenance.

(Here insert the case of Paul)

Our thoughts also recur to the case of Nehemiah and his companions attempting to build the wall of Jerusalem. There was a combination of Arabians Ammonites and Ashdodites and others headed by Sanballat and Tobiah who conspired all of them together to defeat the enterprise. But God brought their counsel to naught and the work went on to completion.

In the second Psalm we are told that *the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.* This seems to be a description of the manner in which the enemies of religion act generally: and we see that they cling to the principle of associated effort even when lifting the standard of rebellion against God.

I cannot close this last list of illustrations without referring to an effort that has been made in our days to extirpate Christianity from the earth. I allude to that most sanguinary and horrid association among

the philosophers of Europe and America sometimes called Illuminism. A combination so desperate so secret so powerful so full of the Spirit of hell was probably never set on foot in our apostate world. At the head of this band of desperados may be placed such men as Voltaire, D'Alembert, Frederick and Rousseau. And issuing from their subterranean sessions and having written on their hearts the motto *crush the wretch* they came forth to wield the literature of Europe as an engine against religion. And for a time religion seemed to feel a tremendous shock. But Almighty God at length rolled back the waves of this deluge and caused the wrath of many to praise him.

Yes my hearers it was this desperate association which awakened Christians to counteracting efforts. They wrested the weapons of their adversaries out of their hands and infidelity melted away before the breath of the Almighty. And now Christians can and do employ the same weapons against the mighty ramparts of heathenism and mahometanism. It is singular that while the men of this world in their ordinary concerns - in their support of false religions and opposition to true were in possession of the powerful principle of associated effort it is singular that Christian should never till the last half century learned the important lesson. While their enemies *helped every one his neighbors and every one said to his brother be of good courage* thus doubling and trebling their power Christians were seen standing indeed on the elevated ground of conscious integrity and truth but acting alone and thus rendered liable to defeat.

The lesson however is at length learnt and the energies of Christendom are brought to bear on the kingdom of darkness with an amazing power while a constant increase of numbers to those associated together gives a progressive increase of force to the instruments of benevolence.

And my brethren if the principles of associated effort has wrought such wonders in support of false religions and in opposition to Christianity what may we not expect when it is extensively employed in its defense and propagation? Let it never be forgotten that while men in their worldly associations and in their combinations against religion have had God for their enemy those who are united for the defense of the Gospel have him for their friend and are sure of his protection. Be it then that the number who take resolutely hold of the great plans of benevolence now in operation are comparatively few! Be it that great numbers of professing Christians are asleep on this subject. *Still we say they that be with us are more than they that be with them: For if God be for us who can be against us.* We are enlisted under the banner of the king of kings and Lord of Lords - who speaks and it is done - the commands and it stands fast. What abundant reason have the members of the various societies convened today therefore to say every one to his brother *be of good courage*. They have no reason for despondency or relaxation. The great object they have in view - the salvation of the world is steadily hastening on. Let all the powers of earth and hell combine they cannot check for one moment the advancement of the great work God is accomplishing. The greatest system he has put in operation for this purpose of which these societies form a link is moving and will move steadily on to accomplish that which he pleases - in those who oppose its progress must ere long join in impelling it forward or be crushed under its wheels. Take fresh courage then my brethren to day. Let the bands that bind us to the same common cause and to one another be this day strengthened - and let our hearts be nerved up to still more religious exertions. Let us look back with joy upon what God has done in the conversion of souls all over the earth in the past year and let faith mounting on the wings of time bear us forward only a few years into futurity and there behold our posterity bringing forth the head stone of the building of which we are laying the foundations and with shoutings crying *grace grace unto it*.



Delivered

At Conway June 1823 Before the Benevolent Societies

## Sermon 172 Wars

[Sermon No. 172, "Wars," James 4:1-3, 1823 [Apr 3],  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 13]

James 4:1-3

*From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence,  
even of your lusts that war in your members?  
Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain:  
ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.  
Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

It is proper on such a day as this not only to contemplate our individual sins but to cast an eye abroad and look at those crimes that are chargeable upon nations. For in these too have we a personal interest. If we lend our influence and exertions for the formation and defense of a national compact - if we form a part of that whole by which this is sustained then are we in a degree responsible for the morality of national actions. And if these be such as to provoke the vengeance of God to send abroad his judgments in the earth then may we expect to feel our share of the punishment.

I propose therefore at this time to solicit your attention to the greatest temporal evil that ever visited this world. I mean the subject of war. Other evils have indeed been called greater. The slave trade has been denominated a more crying sin and subjugation to a despotic government has often been called a greater evil. But there has been a false tinselled splendour thrown about war and its true character has been too long concealed under softening and sounding epithets. When its true character is known when its deceitful accompaniments shall be stripped away it will stand forth the king of monsters - the scourge of scourges - the abomination of desolations.

In pursuing this subject I shall call your attention

First to the source from which world wars originate  
Secondly to the effects of wars  
And thirdly to the remedies proposed for their abolition.

First what is the source wherein war originates? In the text the same question is asked. *From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members?* Here we have an instance of that sagacity in tracing actions to their true sources which is one of the internal proofs that the scriptures were inspired. We are pointed in one short sentence to the true source of war viz. the ungodly the pernicious passions of man.

But it will be asked when the unprincipled invader pours his countless armies upon our land burning wasting subjugating and destroying and we resort to the sword to repel him can we be said to be actuated by our lusts? Is it not a pure and commendable patriotism that leads us to risk our lives.

It may be replied that such a war did not originate with the defenders of the country: but with ruthless

invader who lusted and had not kills and desires to obtain. I am not saying that defensive wars are never necessary or justifiable. This is a question I do not propose to discuss at this time and I wish those who believe such wars to be necessary would remember this during the subsequent part of this discourse and I trust they will assent to my remarks. But if any maintain that offensive wars are justifiable then are we at variance. For these do certainly originate in the lusts of men in those passions which are totally hostile to the Spirit of the Gospel. Defensive wars would of course cease were there no offensive ones. So that it is still true that the first origin of all wars is the lust of men which war in their members. Were men possessed of no inordinate desires - were all disposed to justice and equity and mercy forbearance forgiveness and humanity it is certain there could be no such thing as wars. It must then be that all wars have their origin where the apostle says they have.

But it will be said perhaps what if the government of one country insult the government of another - what if they offer an affront to the dignity and honor of the nation and commits outrages on the property or even lives of the citizens in foreign lands? Shall this nation so insulted sit still and endure these disgraces? Would she not thus become contemptible in the eyes of the world? unless she vindicates her honor by an appeal to arms? Would such a war originate in the ungodly lusts of men?

Yes my hearers in some of the very worst passions of the human heart. In pride rank pride - in those same passions which actuate the duelist to take the life of another. He can bring forward and does bring forward just the same reasons as are here mentioned to vindicate himself in his murderous act. He says I have been insulted by the man I challenge. He has endeavored to injure my reputation or my honor. And if I neglect to resent this insult - if I do not vindicate my honor by an appeal to what has long been the mode of deciding such controversies I shall be contemptible in the eyes of gentlemen and be neglected by them. Now you say that such a man is influenced by a false notion of honour: very well then the nation that goes to war to vindicate its insulted or is influenced by the same. But you say that the duelist obtains no real satisfaction even if he slay his opponent: neither does the nation obtain any - if it subdue [????] the conqueror and besides the duelist takes only one life and makes only one family miserable: but when a nation wages war and sacrifices thousands to the wild idea of vindicating its honor - the case is certainly parallel to that of the duelist and if the one be vindicated the other must be.

How totally different my hearers is this spirit which has so long governed nations from the Spirit of Christ! If ever a man was insulted it was he - everyone was injured it was he - if ever the wounded honor of any man required a resort to arms for vindication it was Christ. And he had it in his power to summon all the elements to his aid and to bring confusion and ruin upon his enemies. Yet how patient - how forbearing - how submissive under every reproach. When reviled he reviled not again when he reproached he blessed and he absolutely forbade his disciples to resent injuries by force or with a worldly spirit. But did the reputation of Christ ultimately suffer because he did not resort to arms to defend it? Is not this forbearance forgiveness and meekness the very glory of his character which has recommended it even to the infidel? And if Christ reprobated the thoughts of resorting to arms for a vindication of his honor - if he commands his followers to resist not evil - surely no one will imagine that a supposed affront will justify a Christian in exposing his own life or that of another in a duel. This all will allow: but if private Christians are commanded to follow the example of their Master if they may not commit murder in vindication of their honour by what rule is it that Christian rulers are exempted from the same obligation? Why are not governments bound to be patient under injuries and meek and forgiving under insults as well as individual Christians? The truth is there is no exception in regard to them - there is no need of such an exception: and the resort to arms for avenging the supposed insult or injuries a government receives manifests a spirit as opposite to the Spirit of Christ as light is from darkness. It is offensive war without any doubts. It is giving a license to the most outrageous murder:

and such terms as national honor, patriotism, national rights, national dignity, bravery, etc., whereby used in such a case are mere delusive phrases calculated to varnish over the horrors of war and to conceal the proud and bloody spirit that lies at the bottom.

*Such is their cry - some watch-word for the fight  
Must vindicate the wrong, and warp the right:  
Religion - freedom - order - what you will,  
A word's enough to raise mankind to kill;  
Some factious phrase, by cunning caught and spread,  
That guilt may reign, and wolves and worms be fed! [Source: Poem by Byron, 1814]*

In the second place I propose to glance at the effects of war.

And here I scarcely know where to begin or where to end. Were I to do justice to this head of the discourse I should content myself with nothing less than a history of the world from the days of Nimrod to those of Bonaparte. And I should not merely give this history as it is contained in the works of our able historians (as Rollin and Millot and Mason and Gibbon). I should not merely go with them and conduct my audience to the thousands and tens of thousands of battlefields and their count over the millions of human beings mangled and slain. I should not merely bid them listen to the hard groans and shrieks that rise from the dying in such fields of slaughter while united curses and prayers are mingled together in horrid discord. I should not stop to say who was the conqueror. For in estimating the morality of such actions this is a little moment. But there is another part of this subject of which no history has ever been written a part too that would occupy more volumes than ever have been written - so that were the whole to be disclosed, *I suppose*, with the Apostle, *that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written*. It is a history of the private unseen misery which the carnage and havoc of war produces among the common people. How dreadful the condition of the wretched inhabitants in the region that is made the seat of the war or through which the armies pass. The earthquake the volcano the hurricane are all mere mercy compared to this scourge - plundered property - houses burnt - children murdered or starved - wives and daughters violated and slain these are the legitimate fruits of war these the almost inevitable deeds of those who are vindicating the honor of their country of those are trained up to the science of murder - and make it a profession. Here do we see what man is when the restraints of God and society are taken from him. Here do we see a genuine exhibition of the depravity of the human heart. What great enormities what great miseries could have been produced by an army of infernal spirits marching through a country than were witnessed in the campaigns of Titus against Jerusalem or in the last French campaign in Russia!

But how is all this private misery artfully kept out of sight in the public and official accounts of a campaign! The armies that have been thus making the country through which they pass a desert at length meet on the field of battle - and after a desperate encounter in which perhaps ten or twenty or thirty or even and hundred thousand are murdered one party succeeds in routing the other. And now the conquering party issues a bulletin of its success: and in all our newspapers and public journals this official account is published and is headed *A Glorious Victory* or *Glorious News*. And it contains a statement how such a corp made a noble charge how such officer died gloriously in the arms of victory. But let us follow this account of the battle into the humble dwellings of the poor. One old man takes up the account and after reading it exclaims - This is called a glorious victory but alas they have slain my son my only son! The staff of my old age my only worldly support. *O I will go down to the grave to my son mourning!* In another habitation a female with anxious countenance reads the bulletin and cries out, *Oh, my husband my husband!* They have murdered him. Who shall provide for these orphans! I leave it to

your imagination my hearers to go through a land after a great battle and see the effect the account produces on tens of thousands of miserable fathers and mothers wives and children. Yet all this misery is kept out of sight - no history of it has ever been written - no history of it can be written - it exceeds all the miseries that are experienced on a field of battle. And yet after such a battle there are public rejoicings and illuminations.

Public entertainments are provided - songs in honor of the hearers who gained the victory are composed and sung - their fame is shouted and echoed all over the land and thus by the splendid accompaniments - by the artful official policy of rulers are the thoughts of the public diverted from the horrors of war and made to dwell on certain visionary spectacles of natural honor - national Spirit - patriotism love of country and the like.

Are you a Christian in your belief and feelings? Accompany me then for a few moments and I will show you something for your contemplation. I enter a forest and there discover a man lying on the ground covered with his blood - his features mangled and distorted by wounds - his head cut off and his heart torn out. I stop and cry out *a horrid murder!* The cries is repeated by another man at a little distance - and soon the inhabitants of the next village set off in pursuit of the murderer. The civil officer offers a reward for his apprehension and soon is he taken - cast into prison - tried before a judge - condemned and conducted to a scaffold where thousands of people are assembled to see him launched into eternity.

Accompany me a little farther Christian. I come to the margin of an open field and here I see another lifeless corpse with diseased head and limbs and with his heart lying by his side in his blood. I cry out again *a horrid murder!* Immediately I hear another voice at a little distance *No! A glorious victory!* I look round and as far as my eye can reach I see mangled corpses piled on one another some yet writhing in the agonies of death - while the dog the wolf and the vulture are tearing off the flesh of the dying wretches. I enquire who made all the slaughter. The answer is *the glory of his country! the bravest hero of the age.* And why has he thus destroyed so many? Because the enemies of my king insulted him and the national honor was violated and the territories of the army were larger than they ought to be to maintain a balance of power. Christian can you tell me the difference in the view of God between him who waylays and murders the traveler because he has been insulted by him or wants his money and those who butchered their brethren in the open field because a fancied insult has been offered to the national honor or because their brethren territory is thought to be too large?

Accompany me a little farther Christian. I approach an extensive plain and see two mighty armies drawn up in battle array. Both these armies are professedly Christian armies. It is not Pagan or Mahometan against each other but Christian against Christian. And look! The standards in both armies are a cross! That is both people profess to be the servants of the same crucified Redeemer! *What a shocking sight!* says a writer. Lo! crosses dashing against crosses and Christ on this side firing bullets against Christ on the other. Crossing against cross and Christ against Christ. And hark! I hear the soldiers on both sides in the awful pause that precedes their mutual butchery uttering the Lord's prayer - *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us!* This, Christian, this is war!

And visit again this field of battle when the deadly conflict is over - you there see perhaps 10 or 20 thousand whose souls are going to the judgment. And of what description of men are armies usually composed? Are they made up of such as in the view of charity are prepared for heaven? Melancholy facts force us to an opposite conclusion. There is then reason to suppose that the greatest part of these 10 or 20 thousand souls are going to perdition. And is the advantage gained by this battle sufficient to

compensate this loss! *What is a man profited though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*

To avoid misapprehension I remark that I would by no means condemn all military men as unprincipled and irreligious. Many such no doubt have gone from the field of battle into heaven. Yet it is well known that the great mass of all armies is made up of those whose vices have sunk them to the lower depths of depravity. And one of the arguments of a distinguished writer in favor of war is thereby these dregs of society will be killed off. I wish it too to be understood that in this discourse I do not intend to censure the conduct of any particular government or individual. I wage a war against war only and not against any particular men or parties.

And now my hearers what are the usual advantages derived from an offensive war or one waged to settle some dispute between nations? Usually the parties continue their hostilities till their treasures exhausted and some ten or fifty thousand of their soldiers are killed off and then they may make just such a peace as might have been made in the commencement if a little of the Spirit of Christ instead of a war Spirit had possessed the minds of the rulers. In nine cases out of ten this is the way in which wars terminate. In those cases where one nation has decidedly the advantage of the other the conquerors gain perhaps an accession of a few hundred square miles to their territory which usually lays the foundation for a future war. And sometimes the conquerors annex the whole of an enemy's country to their own: and this prepares the way for the revolt of the subjugated as soon as they are able.

Julius Caesar fought fifty battles and slew one million one hundred and ninety two thousand of his enemies. And what were the benefits he derived from this slaughter? He roused the Spirit of the indignant Romans to assassinate him.

Napoleon Bonaparte slew probably twice that number in all his campaigns. Half a million perished in his last Russian campaign. And what advantages did he or France obtain for all this? He perished in a remote island of the sea the world's prisoner. And France has been impoverished disgraced and almost ruined.

It is impossible to estimate the millions of lives the Romans destroyed after the death of Julius Caesar. And what resulted to them as a compensation? The Empire became unwieldy and corrupt, tottered and fell to ruin.

Alexander the great (such is the world's ideas of greatness) butchered as many as Caesar. But I will not insult you by asking what advantage himself or Macedonia derived from his conquests.

From the year 1110 to 1803 England and France were engaged in 24 different wars. They had in that time 260 years of war and 440 of peace. *If the island of Great Britain and the whole history of France should now be sunk by an earthquake the loss of lives would perhaps be less than what has been occasioned by the voluntary and antichristian wars of these two nations.* And notwithstanding all this bloody sacrifice these two nations remain as to relative strength nearly upon the same footing as at the beginning of these wars. And I do not recollect that a single question of right or title has ever been satisfactorily settled by their appealing to arms – although they hit have for many years been striving to conquer one another. How applicable to their folly are the words of the text! *Ye lust and have not: ye killed and desire to have and cannot obtain: ye fight and war yet ye have not because ye ask not.*

But one thing is gained by war. It gratifies a Spirit of revenge. And although this be very antipodes to Christ's Spirit yet to give it vent has been no doubt the exciting cause of nine tenths of the wars this

miserable world has ever beheld.

It has already been remarked that wars rarely if ever effect the object for which they are undertaken in the settlement of national disputes. Their immediate effects in the murder and misery of thousands have also been mentioned. But there are other important effects which ought to be noticed. They stagnate and destroy all benevolent exertions: *for doth a fountain send forth at the same sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree my brethren bear olive berries? Either a vine figs?* That amount of money which was before apportioned to the saving of men from miseries temporal and eternal is now turned into the channel of their destruction. And had one tenth part of the sums have been expended in wars by Christian Europe during the last three centuries been appropriated to benevolent objects ere this all the lands of paganism would have been christianized and civilized. War also when it terminates pours in by the disbanding of troops a flood of corruption and makes food for the gale and the gallows.

But I have not time to pursue farther the effects of war. I proceed briefly to consider in the third place the means proposed for its abolition.

And here an objection meets us in the threshold of this enquiry. We acknowledge war say many to be a tremendous evil: but it is in the present state of the world a necessary evil - and cannot be avoided until the nature of man be changed.

The same objection was made with just as much force in regard to the slave trade only a few years ago: yet by perseverance that abominable traffic has been abolished by most of the nations of Christendom. The rage for crusades was once very prevalent in Europe and several millions of lives were sacrificed to it. But it is now looked upon as the very height of delusion. Private wars between noblemen were once fashionable but are now abolished. Once it was thought glorious to propagate the Christian religion by the sword and to burn heretics; but now these things are barred as murderous and savage in the extreme. It was customary among our ancestors in England to sell their children for slaves - but how horrid does the practice appear (case of alcohol). And if a great revolution has taken place in the public opinion on these points why may we not hope that a similar change may be effected in regard to war? The tenet indeed shows us that a great revolution must be wrought in the hearts of men ere this take place. But how is that revolution to be effected? Are we to wait for a miracle to produce it? God has promised that the time shall come when *nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more*. But such a period as this he will bring about by the use of means as he does all other great moral events. So long therefore as men sit still and say that war is a necessary evil and must be borne so long as they cultivate its murderous spirit that time will not come. It is then high time that every man in civilized and Christian lands had his hands vigorously at work in this great cause of delivering the species from this dreadful scourge.

But what can we do? will be the enquiry. In the beginning let me say let nothing be done without continued prayer for the blessings of God on our efforts. Under the influence of a humble praying spirit let us put forth all our energies to discourage and quell the war spirit that prevails so extensively and is rooted so deeply. Every possible effort has been made in days past to excite instead of quelling this spirit. Let youth be taught by parents and instructors the real nature of war. Let them be made to see that it is nothing but a kind of legalized murder in its best forms. Instead of stirring up ambition and inflaming their passions by glowing and strained descriptions of military glory and bravery and love of country - let them be told of the vanity of human glory - let the horrors of war be painted before them as well as its tinsel splendours and let them be told nothing but the direct necessity can justify men if they ever can be justified in resorting to the sword. Let it be distinctly inculcated that nations as well as

individuals are bound to be patient under injuries and to suffer rather than resent insults. If such sentiments as these were to take possession of the hearts of men it would be scarcely possible for rulers to carry on wars since it is the public opinion after all running as it does in the war channel that enables governments to involve their people in contests with others. Let this opinion once be turned into the peace channel and rulers must follow the current.

In the next place let us endeavour to acquaint ourselves more thoroughly with the subject of war. Let us read the Bible with a view to determine whether the Spirit of the Christian religion does not absolutely prohibit the encouragement of the war Spirit. Let us read such works as Josephus history of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem or the La Baume's history of the French campaign in Russia in order that we may have the genuine fruits of war brought distinctly before us. Above all let us read a work entitled the *Friend of Peace* which still continues to be published every few months in the metropolis of this state. And finally my hearers is it not high time that a Peace Society were established in this country auxiliary to the Mass. Peace Soc. I see no inconsistency if a man who holds a military commission would unite in such a society and in all lawful methods for exterminating war from the earth. It is in my view high time that every man who has any feeling were awake on the subject. I do believe that the efforts now making to this end will ultimately triumph: but if they fail we fail in a worthy cause.

War my hearers has too long been a disgrace to countries called Christian. It is the foulest blot of the Christian name. The whole history of paganism furnishes nothing more so sanguinary and revolting. It is one of the greatest of clogs to those pillars of benevolence that have recently risen for the civilization and regeneration of the world. It is the mightiest engine Satan ever created on earth: and when this falls he will be seen to fall as lightning from heaven.

And how sickening is it that at such a moment as this we should hear the intelligence that the great nations of Europe are about rushing again into the vortex of war! With all the professions they have wasted only long enough from slaughter to recover strength and sharpen their swords anew for murder and now merely to vindicate some fancied infringement of royal prerogative or rather if the truth were known to check the progress of light and liberty they are about to let loose their ruffians bands to murder and destroy and crush a nation just rising from the civil and religious despotism of centuries.

*My ear is pain'd,  
My soul is sick, with every day's report  
Of wrong and outrage, with which Earth is filled.  
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart;  
It does not feel for man -  
Then what is man? And what man seeing this,  
And having human feelings, does not blush,  
And hang his head, to think himself a man?* [Source: Poem by William Cowper, 1785]

O God have mercy, have mercy upon this...this distracted this wicked world. Let the wrath of men praise thee and the remainder of wrath do thou resist. O let thy Son the Prince of Peace become the king of nations as he is king of saints - and let the blessed period arrive when *they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks – when nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore:* and the glory and the praise shall be thine forever and ever - Amen.

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*[The following two pages at the end may represent a later revision.]*

Let us read the histories of particular campaigns with a view to take a gauge of the misery they produce: and to ascertain the motives that actuate the rulers who make the war and the officers and soldiers who carry it out. These motives let us test not by the false measures of worldly honor and spurious patriotism but by the unerring word of God. Especially let us the publications of the various peace societies now in existence many of whose productions are the works of men of vigorous minds and expansive benevolence.

Finally let us be ready to enlist our services in forwarding any judicious plans that may be proposed by Peace Societies for ameliorating the horrors or abolishing the practice of war. Even if our faith in the ultimate success of these measures be of the feeblest kind yet let us second any plans whose success we regard as merely possible. If called upon to add our names as members of a Peace Society let not scepticism nor the fear of public opinion prevent us joining that small but worthy band who to the weapons of truth and scripture alone are raising against the war. Or if it be necessary to lend our names to bring the subject before the rulers of the nation - and to persuade them to move in this noble enterprise why should we fear to be found leading the cause of suffering outraged humanity?

O my hearers do we feel at all the enormity of this evil? It is a disgrace even to Paganism and Mahomedanism. How foul then must be the blot which it makes upon the Christian escutcheon! Oh it stand up a call of adamant to obstruct the progress of every benevolent enterprise. It is the mightiest engine Satan ever set in motion for sustaining his bloody empire on earth: and when this is destroyed he will be seen to fall like lightning from heaven.

But dreadful as war is the world is full of it and scarcely a breeze comes from the east or the west the north or the south that is not swelled by its murderous notes. Even now the nations of Europe are pausing from their bloody work only long enough to sharpen their swords. Oh who can contemplate the complicated sufferings which this scourge and its train of fiends is continually implanting upon some part of our devoted rare and not cry out with the poet, *My ear is pain'd* etc.

Delivered

At Conway Fast Day 1823

At Amherst College Fast Day April 5 1832

## Sermon 175 Intentions of the Lord's Supper

[Sermon No. 175, "Intention of the Lord's Supper", 1823 Jul,  
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*[Near the end he seems to suggest that some unregenerate persons will be saved.]*

The commonness of any transaction almost infallibly weakens its influence upon our hearts. Even the Christian is often disposed to go about like the Athenians enquiring for some new thing. He is fond of looking at the truths and duties of religion through a different medium or having them delivered by a new instrument. Hence a new preacher especially if he possess any eccentricities will be courted and praised and pursued with eagerness while the regular minister of long standing must be forsaken: because he cannot always be novel but must be sometimes repetitious and deliver over the same truth in nearly the same words. Yet the man who has a steady and a strong attachment to the truth of the Gospel will not be troubled so much with those itching ears that are disposed to keep up teachers. And he will be willing to have the great truths of the Gospel urged upon him with frequency.

My brethren notwithstanding the simplicity and obvious significance of the service we are now commemorating yet through its frequency are we not inclined to forget or feebly to realize the objects of the institution of this supper? And will it produce drowsiness in any of you when I say that I am about to exhibit before you the intention of this ordinance - or the truths and duties it is intended to service us of. Should this be the effect of my discourse yet I pray you let the thought that your Lord and Master Jesus Christ is in the riches of this feast and he presides though unseen by the eye over these solemnities: let this thought keep your faculties awake.

And however insensible we may be to it it is nevertheless true that the symbols now before you are most lively and significant and to the Christian who is really a Christian they are even deeply interesting. It is to men who have no religion that religious services become irksome and dull if they cannot be fed with novelty. Such men do not wish to hear over again and again the same truths of revelation because they do not love them at all and are also condemned by them. When therefore the professing Christian finds himself unaffected by the solemn and tender and admirably adapted ceremonies of the communion table is it not high time for him seriously to enquire whether he has any part or lot in the matter and whether it would not be equally irksome and weary to eat bread and drink wine over and over again in the kingdom of God.

But what are the leading things signified by the Lord's supper.

First – its intention is to give a forcible representation of the sufferings and death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world.

When Christ had given thanks he distributed the bread saying *this is my body broken for you*. In like manner *he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them saying drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins*. It was scarcely possible that Christ could have more plainly pointed us to his atonement than in these words. He seems to have referred to the predictions in the prophets on this same subject - where it is said that *he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes are we healed*. By a new Testament Christ means a new covenant - the covenant of works not

being able to save men. And this new covenant he represents as sealed by his blood. Paul has an argument on this subject – *Neither the first testament, says he, was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took that blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people. Saying this is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* I might quote many other passages to show what the sacred writers meant by Christ shedding his blood a ransom for many. But it seems unnecessary. For it must be a deep and awful prejudice to not see in such texts as have just been read that Christ by his death made an atoning sacrifice for the sins of many. God placed him in the stead of sinners and by requiring him to lay down his life he exhibited to the sinners his abhorrence of sin and his determination to punish it as he had threatened.

And merely shedding his blood was not all that is implied in what Christ did for our redemption. His soul was in agony in agony inexpressible. And the pouring out of the wine in this ordinance is a holy emblem of what the prophet denominates *pouring out his soul even unto death making his soul an offering for sin, etc.* These figures convey the idea of the most intense agony. And to that agony - to those sufferings Christ endured in Gethsemane and on the cross do those emblems before us point our attention. When we see the drops of blood dropping on the ground when we hear the dreadful cry my God my God why hast thou forsaken me - my soul is empty and sorrowful even unto death. The distress of an ordinary death disappears and Christ sustaining the sins of a world - growing under the displeasure of God and the furious assaults of the powers of darkness fills all the field of view and if we have any Christian feelings and know within us a deep sense of grace in ourselves and of mercy and grace unspeakably great is our Immanuel.

The evil of sin too appears in vivid colors at this sacramental table. All this suffering of our Redeemer was necessary to satisfy the justice and holiness of God or it would never have been permitted. Had it been a mere man or an angel or even the highest archangel we should not be so much astonished that it would demand from such an one so much anguish and distress in order to expiate sin. But when we are told that this Saviour whom we see enduring all this untold agony is *the mighty God the everlasting Father the Prince of Peace - who in the beginning was with God and who was God – thinking it not robbery to be equal with God,* how deep a sense must we have of the magnitude of that evil which could demand such a being to suffer so much! And how overwhelming the thought that this dreadful enemy has been suffered to rule over us in times past and that he still exerts upon us so great an influence!

It is the intention of the ordinance we now celebrate in the second place to exhibit not only the atonement made by Christ but also the other fundamental kindred doctrines of the Gospel.

So great and painful a sacrifice – so mighty a work as Christ accomplished shows us how low human

nature had fallen. They force us to *look unto the rock whence we were hewed and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged*. They proclaim that by nature we are all concluded under sin and are children of wrath - incapable of attaining salvation in ourselves and all deserving of everlasting perdition.

The great doctrine of justification by faith also shines forth in this ordinance. Here we see the character of man in its true light and clearly discern that by works of law no flesh living can be justified while the magnitude of the works Christ has wrought and for man shows us that in him there is plenteous redemption.

In like manner we see in this ordinance the justice of God in the everlasting punishment of the finally impenitent. If they can resist so much love as shines upon them from the cross of Christ if they can look unaffected upon his dying agonies and feel no tenderness when they hear his distressing cries can there be a punishment too severe or of too long duration for them? Can such obstinacy such willful blindness and insensibility receive too severe a chastisement - O ye who lower down the penalty of God's law and call eternity time come and look upon the cross of Jesus and let your hearts be melted and your disbelief and murmurings cease.

In the third place the Lord's supper is intended to admonish Christians of the second coming of Christ.

This is often foretold of the Saviour in the N. Testament and Christians are exhorted to look for that blessed hope and the *glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*. And Christ when presenting the bread and the wine to his disciples said *as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*. This declaration is what I should call an impressive consolation to believers. It is consoling that the same Saviour who poured out his life on the cross for them is finally to be their Judge and it is impressive because it reminds us that that solemn hour is hastening rapidly on. It is calculated to lead the Christian to watch and be sober and to enquire what manner of persons ought us to be in all holy conversation and godliness looking *for and hasting unto the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat*.

Fourthly this ordinance is intended to exhibit Christians as a distinct class of men publicly united by a common and indissoluble bond.

After once taking this bond upon us there is no receding from the lofty eminence we stand upon - unless we fall like the apostate angels never to rise again. Sitting around this board we declare before God angels and men that we are a band of brethren and having *one faith one Lord one baptism*, that we love one another - that we pray for one another - that we sympathize in one another's sorrows and rejoice one another's joys - that we are mutually pledged to stand up and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints - that we are determined to live soberly godly and righteously in this world and that we are passing forward to the same eternal home at last. We may in our intercourse with the world contradict all this but such is the aspect in which we are presented to the world to day: and the world are sensible of all this and will watch with jealous eye all our conduct: and if we disavow tomorrow what our professions declare today they will point at us the finger of scorn and right is it that they should censure us for all real unrepented inconsistencies of conduct. This ordinance is the public seal of our covenant with God. It declares to all around us that we have not put ourselves under the protection of the Lord God Almighty - and do not fear what man can do to us and are willing to suffer the reproach of Christ and to follow him through evil report and good report. It places us in the high attitude of sons and daughters of the Lord of Hosts who have been born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of men but of God. Blessed distinctions! noble privileges! May we never forfeit them - never abuse

them - never shrink from the duties they impose - never cease to be grateful to our Redeemer for them - never descend from the glorious eminence where we feed on angels food to wallow in the mire of this world and feed on its husks. Why should we desire the leeks and onions of Egypt when we are fed with the manna from heaven.

Fifthly This ordinance is intended to inspire us with unfeigned brotherly love.

Christ is exhibited to us in the most interesting attitude of his earthly course. Whether our thoughts recur to him as he sat around the table with his disciples to institute this supper or hung groaning and bleeding on the cross. Look at him around the first communion board! *One of you shall betray me*, says he - and one of those for whom he was about to die did betray him. *Before the cock crow one of you shall deny me thrice* - says he and one of them did deny him. *All of you, says he, shall be offended in me this night* - and in truth they all forsook him and fled - in the trying hour when his enemies were mocking and taunting him. Thus was his unspeakable love rewarded by those most blessed by it and chosen and out of the world to reap peculiar rewards. But did the Saviour manifest anything like resentment for this cruel ingratitude. Oh no, around his table the last time he should eat with them on earth was too tender a moment for severe rebuke. Jesus could weep over them and pray for them but he could harbour nothing but love towards them. He could wash their feet even in view of all their base desertions but no severe chastising rebuke escaped his lips.

And can any of us brethren while sitting around this same table have one feeling but love towards those who partake with us. Look about you my brethren and select the person if there be any such person who has injured you and whom you can not but think of as an enemy and tell me has he ever treated you as cruelly as ungratefully as those disciples treated Christ. And if Christ could forgive them and wash their feet - can you not forgive him and wash his feet. For he says if I your Lord and Master have washed your feet ye ought also to wash one another's feet. Or if your heart is not altogether melted down into forgiveness and tenderness in view of the conduct your Saviour look at him as these elements exhibit him in the very highest and last moment of suffering on the cross - when his love for you shone forth in meridian splendour and was stronger than death. Look at that bleeding Saviour exclaiming *my God my God why hast thou forsaken me* and then harbour if you can one angry or unkind one unforgiving feeling toward your brother. Listen to his dying prayer, *Father forgive them*, and then refrain if you can from offering the same prayer in behalf of your offending brother.

Finally this communion season is intended to remind us of the communion of saints in heaven.

Jesus told his disciples that he should no more eat bread nor drink wine with them on earth. But *I appoint unto you*, says he, *a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. For that heavenly table this earthly feast is one of the appointed means of preparing us my brethren. For to us also is this table and kingdom appointed if we really love the Lord Jesus Christ. But how great reason have we to suppose that many communicants on earth having *a form of godliness but denying the power thereof* will never have a seat at the heavenly board. And we will also hope that someone who never come to this earthly feast through a distrust in the promises of God will notwithstanding have a place to eat bread and drink wine with their Redeemer in heaven. Although they dare not declare before the world that they are resolved to trust that Saviour and do thus intentionally wound him in the house of his friends we will indulge the belief that he who could wash the feet and speak so many comforting words to those who are about to deny him will forgive these desponding souls and appoint to them a kingdom in heaven: and that we shall there meet some whom we would gladly meet at this communion board on earth

because we think we see in their hearts the image of God and because we are pained to see them thus unintentionally exerting so unhappy an influence upon an unregenerate world.

Oh my brethren how sweet is it to look forward from this table of our Lord to a communion with him in heaven! Here we bring a body of sin to weigh down our Spirits and check our holy joys but there we shall have no occasion to lament the feebleness of our love for it will rise spontaneously and exert a supreme energy towards our God and Redeemer. Here we lament the indistinctness of our views - the dullness of our affections – and a variety of incumbrances these frail bodies produce upon our souls. But there the Spiritual bodies in which we shall be clothed will never faint or tire nor clog the perpetual and vigorous exercise of the soul. Here many a distressing doubt about our good estate comes over our souls like a dark cloud thrusting out the rays of the sun of righteousness. But there doubt and darkness will forever flee away. For God will be our sun and shade and the Lamb the light of that glorious world. Here we meet with the affecting thought that it may be the last time. But there separation and death will be unknown and unfeared. Between us and that happy state there lies indeed the dark valley of death. But our Redeemer has marked out a path across its gloomy regions and his merciful arms are stretched out to receive us when we fall asleep in him and when that last enemy is overcome - that last fear subdued - that last agony endured - a glorious morning will break in upon our souls - the light of heaven will beam on us when we awake in our Saviour's likeness and we shall meet all our Christian brethren whom we love on earth to part no more forever.

Delivered

At Conway July 1823

## Sermon 177 Nature of Confessing and Forsaking Sin

[Sermon No. 177, "Nature of Confessing and Forsaking Sin," Proverbs 28:13, 1823 Sep, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 14]

Proverbs 28:13

*But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*

This is only a part of the verse: and it is necessary to recite the whole of it that it may be understood. *He that confesseth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* As I wish to confine my remarks to the latter part of this verse I have omitted the former part of it in reciting the text.

There is no verbal obscurity resting upon this promise. Everyone perceives that its meaning is that the man who confesses and forsakes his sins shall obtain mercy of his God. That is the pardon of his sins and a reconciliation to God. Here then is a brief exhibition of the terms on which the violators of God's law can make their peace with him. These terms are exhibited in different parts of the scriptures in a variety of aspects in order that we should be in no danger of mistaking them. To that exhibition which the text presents I invite your attention. I shall attempt

In the first place to show what is implied in confessing our sins.  
Secondly show what is meant by forsaking them.  
And thirdly explain more fully the mercy which the penitent obtains.

In showing what is meant by confession of sins I observe first that it does not imply as the Roman Catholics declare a confession to the priest. They denominate this confession penance and direct that it be performed secretly to the priest as often at least as once a year and that it must be very particular embracing every sin and all the circumstances attending them. After this confession the priest anogates to himself the prerogative of Jehovah and pronounces the sin forgiven. And the church of Rome pronounces that man accursed who declares that this blasphemous and scandalous procedure is not a sacrament instituted by Christ and not essential to salvation. But the truth is there is not the shadow of any such ordinance in the Scripture. The high priest of the Jews did indeed on the tenth day of the seventh month confess the sins of the people over the head of the scapegoat which typically bore them into the wilderness but this is very different from individuals confessing to the priest. James also directs Christians to *confess their faults one to another*, but this is not directing them to confess to the priest any more than for the priest to confess to the laity.

The modern Jews have also a practice of confessing their sins once a year while standing in a tub of water. And when sick they confess to the rabbies much in the same manner as the papists - and as much in opposition to the bible.

2. To confess our sins implies an acknowledgment of them to the person or persons particularly injured.

This was the practice required among the Jews as is evident from a variety of passages. In the Levitical

law we find the following clause: *If a soul sin and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour, or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein: Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering.* This requirement of restitution demands confession or rather implies it since the very act of restitution necessarily embraces this idea. When the acknowledgment of an offence committed against anyone and restitution for for it seems to have been regarded not merely as positively but also morally binding by holy men of old. Samuel on a certain occasion when the Jews murmured against him said to them, *Behold here I am: witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed whose ox have I taken or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded whom I have oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it you.* David recognizes this same principle when he replied to the parable of Nathan as the Lord liveth *the man that done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the Lamb fourfold because he did this thing and because they have no pity.*

It seems then that the duty of confessing sin to the person injured was regarded by holy men of old as a very evident one binding not only perceptively but morally. And ought it not to be thus regarded by us? What can be more reasonable than that when we become sensible of an injury we have done to our neighbour we should take every method in our power to make reparation! It is a golden rule that we *should do to others as we should they should do unto us.* Now if a man has wronged you in your property or reputation or happiness would you feel satisfied that his repentance was genuine unless he came to you to confess his fault to ask forgiveness and to make all the restitution in his power? Would you not expect as much as this from him - could you be satisfied with any thing short of this? If so then the rule first mentioned demands that you take the same course towards the man whom you have injured in property character or comfort. It is indeed a hard lesson for proud human nature to learn - a hard course to enter upon. But it is the touchstone that shows the sincerity of our repentance. We may do everything else the law of God demands and yet stopping here we show that the old leaven has never been subdued within us.

But perhaps he we have wronged our neighbour and he is ignorant of it and so are the rest of the world. No matter - confession to him is due - reparation is due. The law of God demands it – the laws of common justice demand. What though our neighbour does not know the injury - yet he will know it soon at the day of judgment and God knows it now. And with what feeling could the man who has injured his neighbour and made no confession or reparation meet him at the bar of heaven! We are required to render unto all their dues. But is not restitution due to the man we have injured and restitution implies confession. *Confess your faults to one another* is an injunction which no authority but that of the God who gave it can annul.

In a certain sense the man who sins injures all mankind and it might seem proper to demand public confession therefore for every sin. But in this respect no restitution can be made to the world for the injury done them by sin except a reformation of the life; and if they witness this in any sinner the world ought to be satisfied. Besides a public profession of Christ implies in it a public confession for sin – a public acknowledgment that the past life has not been such as it ought to be. But to confess particular sins before the world has in general a tendency to instruct the young in the wily stratagems of sin and to



incite them to follow the sin rather than the repentance: and unless we find an express command in scripture to make such a public confession we are authorized in neglecting it.

There may be instances however in which a public acknowledgment of transgression is required by the laws of God and the principles of reciprocal justice. But I must think such cases are confined entirely to members of the visible church who have fallen into scandalous sins. As such by their original profession have given a public pledge that they would no longer be the slaves of sin and now have forfeited that pledge they are bound to take every measure in their power to repair the deep injury they have done the cause of religion. And unless they publicly avow their sorrow for the deed the church will lie under the reproach of patronizing their enormities.

But if we are bound to confess every sin of which we have been guilty toward individuals then will it not follow that we must go to every man both professors of religion and others and make an acknowledgment: since if we have done towards them no violence our feelings towards them have not been such before our conversion as they ought to have been? Or if there are any exceptions what are they?

It is obvious that there are very many exceptions – that is we are not bound to make a private confession to every individual although it is true that we have injured all. But in the majority of instances the only reparation of the injury we can make is by a public reformation of life. Hence then we derive a rule by which we may be governed in such cases. In all instances in which a public reformation of life is all the reparation of the injury we can make we are not bound to make individual confessions. But when we have amended our ways and there still remain individuals or public bodies to whom something more is due from us and to whom we are able to render something more we are bound to acknowledge the particular sins to those individuals or to those bodies and to make restitution for the wrong. This rule comprehends all those cases in which we have knowingly deliberately and voluntarily through malice or self interest done an injury to an individual or public body that is the church - in their property or character or peace and comfort by fraud lying extortion deception or slander. The justice of such a rule commends itself to every unbiased man's conscience without any further illustration.

### 3. To confess our sins implies knowledge of them to God.

Here there are no exceptions - no half way acknowledgments of our sins. Every one of them whether we were aware of it at the time or not was a personal injury done to God. This law is exceedingly broad and embraces every thought word and deed of our lives. In that law no sin whether directed originally against God or man is excused or palliated: but its unbending and universal penalty is death - a living death and ever lasting death. And the only way to escape that penalty is to confess as humble penitents every one of our transgressions. That confession does not mean a mere enumeration of our sins before God - He already knows them all - his eye has followed us in all our devious paths ever since we had a being the pen of iron and point of a diamond which Gabriel wields has written them all down. But God wishes to see us confess our sins with true sorrow of heart - he wishes us to see their enormity and to mourn over them to be smitten with a sense of our ingratitude and to have excited within us a deep and lasting hatred of them. He wishes to have us feel as if sin were a grievous and heavy burden a body of death clinging to us - a loathsome disease under which we are laboring and of which no physician but Christ can cure us - and for which no remedy but his grace can be effectual. He wishes to see us not endeavoring to palliate the least of our offenses nor to regard any sin as small which is committed under such light and against such a being. With such confession God is well pleased. With any other he is not well pleased. David has given us an example of this kind of confession which we shall do well to imitate.

*I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is even before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, be clear when thou judgest.* David here alludes to the most horrid of all crimes viz. murder and adultery. Yet though he had thus inflicted the greatest of evils upon his fellows men yet when he confessed the injury to man with that towards God it seemed as if against God and him only he had sinned. Nor does he endeavour to palliate his sins by representing them as the effect of a sudden temptation: but he confesses that he had within him a corrupt nature which was prepared for everything that was bad. *Behold,* says he in the next verse, *I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* How very different his views - of his sinfulness from those of the man who fancies that he has within him by nature some dispositions inclining him to the practice of holiness.

I am to show in the second place what is meant by forsaking our sins.

And upon this head there will be no need of prolixity. The preaching of John the Baptist will illustrate the point. This His cry was *repent and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the tree: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. And the people asked him saying what shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came the publicans to be baptized and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him saying and what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages. Let him that stole, says the Apostle to the Ephesians, steal no more but rather let him labour, working with his hands. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying. Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* To forsake our sins does not consist wholly in leaving them off, but it implies the actual performance of good deeds. Nothing short of this can show our confessions to be sincere and the result of genuine repentance. And it is to be feared that this is a rock on which very many split. They are ready to confess themselves to be sinners - nay they can weep over their sins and cry to God for mercy while at the same time they hold sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues and take no vigorous measures to cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye that offends. Their false tears ease conscience and thus they practice upon themselves the grossest deception. But away with that religion that does not lead a man to forsake his sins and to practice holiness. Away with that hypocrisy which while it cries Lord Lord before men does do the will of God - but still feeds by an indulgence some secret abominable lust. Away with those lying lips which confess to day deny and sin tomorrow as greedily as ever which in one breath deplore the evil of sin and the next breath send fourth a stream of slander and reproach that discovers the rottenness of the heart within. Let those who would serve God remember that he sees through such thin disguises and pours indignation upon mere empty profession and confession. Let them remember that their evil lusts are to be denied their inordinate desires checked and their whole souls brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Lastly I am to consider more fully the nature of that mercy the penitent obtains.

First he ought to have mercy shown him by his fellow man.

When a man has sincerely confessed his sins not only to God but to those particularly injured by them and has forsaken them and appears to have entered upon a new and a better course what more can we

demand of him? However severe the injuries we have received from such an one yet when such fruits appear in his life it indicates a heart full of deadly malice and excited by the spirit of hell not to grant such a man our forgiveness and bid him a cordial welcome to our friendship and assistance. It cannot be expected that we should at once give up all fears concerning the sincerity of a man's repentance who has injured us and lived a life of open ungodliness. Prudence demands that we should confide in him for the future only so far as he gives evidence of genuine reformation and that we should not place ourselves entirely within his power. And if he be a true penitent he will not desire to be exposed to such a temptation but would prefer to have something to remind him of his transgressions so that as David says his sin may be ever before him. But not to reach forth to such a man the right hand of fellowship refuse to place any confidence at all in his declarations is uncharitable and unchristian. And in general the man who does exhibit the true spirit of a penitent will find Christians and the respectable part of society ready to welcome him as a long lost prodigal and to take hold of his hand and help him forward in the path to heaven.

But in the second place what is of infinitely more consequence such a man obtains mercy of God.

Of this the real penitent is sure: and if he obtains the favour of God it is comparatively of little consequence what are the feelings of men towards him. We need not fear the enmity of those who when they have killed the body have no more that they can do when they have him for their friend who is able to destroy their soul and body in hell. To have mercy of God implies in the first place a pardon of those sins he has conquered and forsaken. Though they have been like scarlet they will be made white as snow – though red like crimson they will be made like wool. Paul declares that he was pardoned as a pattern of all long suffering to those who should after believe - and let our sins be ever so many or great if we confess them with a true godly sorrow and forsake them God will remove them as far from us as the east is from the west.

But this is not all. The man who confesses and forsakes his sins will also be made heir to the riches of heaven. From being an enemy of God and an heir of hell he will be made entitled to honor glory and immortality in heaven. The curse of a broken law will not only be taken away but the rewards of sinless obedience will be his.

And will all this flow down to the penitent as the reward of his confessing and forsaking his sins? Far from it. Be he penitent as he may and reformed as he may an unyielding law demands the infliction of the penalty he has incurred by his sins. Stern justice requires the execution of it - and mercy is silent and can only weep at that fate which she knows is deserved. But lo! The Son of God comes forth a willing victim and bows his sinless head to the stroke of justice. That blow falls made heavy and dreadful by the sins of the world. Justice chops her avenging sword and declares the penalty to be paid - the satisfaction to be complete. Mercy with exultation seizes the penitent to her bosom and pronounces him pardoned - justified and adopted into the family of God. His Saviour has borne the load in his stead and died the just for the unjust. The gates of heaven fly open at the voice of the Saviour - and the eternal father smiles acceptance on the penitent returned from his hardenings and his ransom paid by the precious blood of Jesus. O thou returning and pardoned prodigal bitterly as you have wept over your sins let not the fountain of your tears be dried till you have bedewed the cross of that Saviour with tears of love and joy!

Delivered

At Conway July 1823

## Sermon 178 Meditation Part 2

[Sermon No. 178, "Meditation," Part 2 Psalms 39:3, 1823 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 14]

Psalms 39:3

*While I was musing the fire burned.*

In the morning I devoted your attention my hearers to the influence of meditation upon the religious affections. I began with love as the most important of these affections and mentioned that there was a love of complacency towards God and all holy beings a love of gratitude and a love of benevolence. Although I did but just touch upon the love of complacency and of gratitude yet the time usually allotted to a discourse was exhausted and a consideration of the love of benevolence was deferred till this time. Thirdly let us look to the influence of meditation upon the (affection) love of benevolence.

By the love of benevolence I mean that compassion the good man feels for those who are under the influence of sin and are actually suffering its effects or are about to suffer them; and the sincere desire such a man feels to relieve the wretched. In short I mean that strong and mixed emotion the Christian feels for the impenitent sinner. He cannot have a complacency in the character of the man who is an enemy of God but he can have a pity for him - can have an earnest desire to be instrumental of the reconciliation of his soul to God and the removal of that curse which lies on his head (to crush into everlasting despair). It is just the same kind of love which God felt for our lost world when upon looking down upon it he could not see one righteous no not one - yet he saw a ruined wretched race madly rushing onwards to destruction and he pitied them and sent his Son to seek and to save that which was lost. It is the same kind of love as that which Christ felt when he wept over Jerusalem in view of her coming woes although he knew that in a few hours the inhabitants would imbue their hands in his life blood.

Such being the nature of the love of benevolence and such beings its objects it is obvious that by meditating on the wretched condition of careless and impenitent sinners the Christian love of benevolence towards them will be increased.

I speak not here of a love of benevolence in regard to their temporal condition although the Christian does not overlook this. But I speak of that love which compassionates and sighs and weeps over the wretched condition of their souls in regard to eternity. In the single fact that the impenitent man is an enemy of God (and daily and hourly exposed to everlasting burnings) there is solemnity enough to outweigh every worldly consideration and make the Christian almost forget any temporal suffering he may endure.

Yet Christians every soul around you that has not been regenerated by the Spirit of God is in this condition. No matter if it be a husband or a wife - a father or a mother a sister or a brother a son or daughter: (the case of such an one is thus dreadful and pitiful). These objects around which you find the cords of earthly love so closely twined may the very next hour be lifting up their eyes in torments and the gates of hell be forever closed upon them. Amiable as they now appear if the love of God has not

been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost they are in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. They are the obstinate enemies of the God you supremely love - their motives are all selfish. They have never yet offered up one prayer that is acceptable to God nor performed one action from a regard to his glory. The restraints of education and grace conceal the depravity of their hearts: but if there be any truth in the bible their *hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*. They rise in the morning with the curse of eternal death upon them and they lie down at night with the same curse unremoved.

And what renders this picture still more deplorable is the fact that impenitent men are insensible to their condition. They do not believe a word of this description of their character. They treat it as the ravings of fanaticism or intolerance. There is a slumber so deep upon their eyes that the loudest most affectionate warnings cannot break it. They spurn away every solicitation and withstand every entreaty. (While the very fires of hell flash in their face it will excite nothing but their enmity to exhort them to escape from them.) They are so utterly ignorant of the true state of their hearts that they fancy themselves to be fit for heaven when they have never taken one step towards a preparation.

Add to all that the very next hour may place them beyond the reach of mercy. The brittle thread by which they are kept out of eternity is every moment liable to be broken and the Spirit of God will not strive with them forever. While they are sitting down in careless security the pen of iron and the point of a diamond which Gabriel holds may be registering in heaven their irrevocable doom. They hang from day to day and from hour to hour upon the mere sovereign mercy of that God who is angry with the wicked every day. The very mercy they are abusing and despising is all that keeps them out of misery a single moment.

It is to real Christians that I address these remarks. The man who has not the love of God in his heart - the man who has never searched his own heart will treat them as extravagant and untrue: and the professor of religion who has a form of godliness but denies its power will have no benevolence that is sincere and operative in view of the condition of sinners. But to you who are real believers in Christ I put the enquiry whether such meditations of these upon the sinner's state will not make the Christian's heart bleed - and had him to pray most fervently to God for an outflowing of the Holy Spirit. (In the silent hours of reflection then my brethren let the case of your impenitent children and fixed in all its naked and unvarnished horrors be revolved again and again in your minds until you shall feel the fire of benevolence burning within you and you find yourselves involuntarily making an effort on their behalf.)

Another effect of meditation is to awaken in the Christian's heart holy desires - desires after holiness - desire after heaven and desire after an extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Look into your heart Christian and compare its condition with that declaration of the apostle that for which hath a hope of heaven *purifieth himself even as God is pure*. Yet how many unsanctified affections remain within you how many passions hostile to vital godliness - how much pride to puff you up and make you think of yourself above what you ought to think - how much of selfishness remains and how faint a resistance does the religious principle make to all these enemies. Look back upon your past life and see how much occasion you have given to your Christian brethren to mourn over your unworthy conduct how much of a worldly minded you have exhibited to bring upon you the reproaches of those who are hostile to the truth - how limited and imperfect is the knowledge of the gospel you have obtained although you have had it in your hands so many years - how often you have neglected or but half performed the duties of self-examination and secret prayer how distrustful you have been of the providence of God - how much greater interest you have often manifested in the merest worldly trifle

than in the cause of religion - in short how much of earth and how little of heaven do you perceive in your past feelings words and actions. And say does not such a retrospect quicken your desires after more holiness and stricter conformity to the will of God! Do they not humble you deeply before God and lead you to tremble lest you are reposing upon a false hope? (If such be the effect of these meditations consent consent not Christian to suffer one day of your life to close until they shall have been solemnly and earnestly pressed upon your conscience.)

And would you increase and strengthen your desires after heaven? Let your soul then abstract itself daily for a short time from things seen and temporal and look at the things that are unseen and eternal. Approach and listen to the songs of heaven. View its blessed inhabitants removed forever from the reach of fear and pain and sorrow and disappointment in every other mortal trial. Their services their joys are obstructed by no earthly incumbrances - while here a thousand clogs oppress you and obstruct your exertions and enjoyments in religion - you mourn on earth continually the longer the languor of your affections - the coldness of your love - the strength of your sins. But in heaven their harps are always in tune and their song is always a song of praise flowing from hearts full of holy love. Their wrestling with sin and temptation and Satan their sighing and weeping their fears and doubts and discouragements are forever at an end - but on earth how severe is the contest you have to maintain with all these and a thousand other foes! In that happy society in heaven are all your pious brethren and friends who have gone before you and from their glorious thrones they beckon you to come and share their delights. They ask you how you can cling to (a world) the earth which is so full of foes and vexations to a holy soul - how you can bear with the sin that is within you without you and not sigh for that blessed state where all is purity and peace and glory. Drink in such thoughts as these O Christian muse upon them until the fire burneth until your soul shall long and sigh more ardently for the rest that remaineth to the people of God - until your earthly dross shall leave you - (until the entanglements of flesh and sense shall drop from your soul) and you shall be constrained to live as a pilgrim sojourner on earth.

Would you have your desires for the prevalence and extension of the Redeemer's kingdom increased. Then Christians cast your eyes around you and observe how extensive and powerful is the kingdom of darkness in the world. See how well understood is the combination that is maintained against godliness. See how much wiser the children of this world are in their plans than the children of light - how artful and subtle are the schemes of Satan for undermining the fortress of Christianity - how faithful are his votaries and what a stronghold he has within the human heart. See what vast multitudes in the very heart of Christian lands - under the full blaze of the gospel - in Christian families the children of Christian parents - what a multitude are living entirely to this world and make no preparation for the judgment - see how many professors of religion there are who have a name to live while they are dead - how many who shrink from taking a bold and decided stand against the enemies of religion - how many who are endeavoring to serve both God and Mammon - how many who under the garb of sanctity are endeavouring to make proselytes instead of making Christians - how many whose whole business is to disseminate ruinous errors in doctrine and practice and how few there are who are men of strong faith - of deep humility - of ardent prayer of blameless lives and of genuine zeal in the service of God - how few whose zeal does not degenerate into deathlike apathy or men wild in this reveries of enthusiasm. In short observe how true religion has to struggle that she may not be utterly banished from the world - and then in one expansive glance behold the countless millions on whom the light of revelation has never beamed and will not your desires for the extension of the kingdom of Christ burst forth into an ardent prayer - *thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven - O Lord revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.*

The next religious affection (feeling) meditation tends to strengthen and increase is hope.

A man cannot meditate long upon religion without being led to see something of his true character. The consequence of this self-examination will be that his hope if well founded will be strengthened or if false will be destroyed and a new one obtained. Hope may exist in the soul while its remains almost inactive and inoperative. Many condition especially in religion if we have no hope our efforts languish - our duties are neglected and our comforts are dead. In order to have religion in active exercise then it is important that we should have a livelier sense of our interest in the Saviour. I do not mean that we should endeavor to obtain that temporary ecstasy which like the crackling of thorns under a pot flashes for a few moments and then irrecoverably dies - although many Christians place by far too much confidence in these transient excitements which result not from the Spirit of God but from mere animal feeling. But we need a steady increase of evidence and hope of our preparation for heaven. And the tendency of persevering meditation is to produce this effect. It will make us more heavenly minded and hope will increase just in proportion to the increase of our devotion. Unless indeed we chance to be afflicted with a melancholy desponding temperament or from erroneous ideas of the character of God. By meditating on his character however we shall be led to form correct views of it. Instead of having a sort of idea that he is a hard master we shall be led to see that *like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him* - that he is long suffering and gracious and of great kindness not willing that any should perish. The Christian too will obtain a deeper sense of the fullness and mercy there is in Christ. He will see that it is safe it is certain felicity to cast himself unreservedly upon his compassion and that the more entire his dependance be upon that Saviour the more certain is his acceptance. Let the Christian only take a survey of the glorious work of redemption and of all the Lord has done to accomplish it and he will explain with Paul, *he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Thus will hope gradually brighten more and more unto the perfect day: and every other Christian grace will follow in the train.

In the next place meditation tends to strengthen and increase the Christian's faith.

Look back believer upon your past life and say have ever the promises of God in regard to your soul failed. Have you in a single instance found your Saviour unfaithful to the trust you have committed to him! How often in the darkest hour of trial has he appeared for your deliverance and cast new light and comfort into your soul. What reason have you to extol the riches of divine grace toward you! You have found almost everything else false and faithless but God you have found the same yesterday today and forever. Count over the almost countless instances in which God has been your helper especially remember his greatest of all blessings the awakening of your soul from the slumbers of sin and the bestowment of a new heart upon you - and what reason have you to fear that he who has begun a good work in you will not continue it till the day of Jesus Christ? Away then with a faithless unbelieving spirit and throw your soul with unbounded confidence into the arms of infinite mercy.

Another religious affection (feeling of) meditation tends to strengthen and increase is holy courage and boldness in the division in the service of God.

I speak not here that mad and thoughtless bravery which urges on ungodly men to slaughter and death: but of that fortitude which is founded on the fear of God - and a firm confidence in his assistance. And how can the Christian doubt but he shall be successful in his conflicts with sin and corruption if he put on the whole armour of God and fight manfully the fight of faith? He has put himself under the protection of that Being whose weakness is stronger than men and he has the promise of that God that he shall never be forsaken. Let him meditate upon that power and that promise and he will gather new

courage to resist all his enemies. The fear of man which bringeth a snare will be swallowed up in the fear of him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. If father or mother husband or wife brother or sister entice him to neglect the commands of God he will burst away at once from their thralldom and say, *I ought to obey God rather than man - He that loveth father or mother more than Christ is not worthy of him: and he that loveth son or daughter more than him is not worthy of him. If any man come to Christ, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be his disciple.*

Finally meditation is calculated to increase and purify religious joy.

There is a false joy which flashes for a moment and then leaves the man in a state of deeper darkness than before. This kind of joy is founded on selfish feelings and is not a joy in the Holy Ghost. True religious joy is calm and steady growing in ordinary cases with the growth and strengthening with the strength of the believer. It results chiefly from a delight in the moral character of God and a confidence in his government and will of course increase correct views of God and a relish for his character increase. And when the Christian casts his thoughts forward to heaven where he shall see his Saviour as he is - where he shall have a more illustrious display of the glory of God how will his hearth heave with longing (ardent) anticipation and swell with the delightful prospect! A little longer and all the bliss and pleasure of heaven will be enjoyed by you Christians. Yours is that golden throne at the right hand of your Saviour, yours is that smile of complacency and love beaming upon you from God through your Redeemer. Yours is that fruit of the tree of life so rich and nourishing yours that water of life flowing from the throne of God - yours are the songs of praises of heaven yours the glorious society of heaven - the friendship of immortals of angels and redeemed spirits. To all this God has given you a title which nor men nor devils can ever deprive you of. O Christian does not the fire burn while you muse! And does not your soul swell with *joy unspeakable and full of glory*.

Such is a sample of the meditations my hearers which I exhort you to carry with you daily into your closets. Especially let much of the holy sabbath be spent in such sober heart searching and pious reflections. This is an age of intense religious action: and so much is doing in the Christian world that there is great danger lest the beloved especially the inexperienced Christian neglect the all-important business of secret closet meditation. There is danger amid the multiplicity of means enjoyed at this day of being so much occupied with services in public as to leave no time for self-examination and reflection. Many persons also find their feelings so much more deeply moved in public meetings than in their closets that they are tempted to substitute the former for the latter. But my brethren and let us beware of being thus fatally drawn aside from the path in which the pious of other ages have trod. Let us not content ourselves in our closet meditations with merely reading a religious newspaper or periodical publication. But next to the bible let such works as those of Baxter and Doddridge and Watts and Breck and Thomas and Edwards and Leighton and Taylor and Beveridge and Owen and Kempis be the companions of our meditations. Let us drink in the holy Spirit they contain and by the blessing of God we shall grow in grace in the [????] of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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## Sermon 179 Meditation Part 1

[Sermon No. 179, "Meditation," Part 1 Psalms 39:3, 1823 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 7: folder 14]

Psalms 39:3

*While I was musing the fire burned.*

The process of experimental religion although mostly secret is still substantial and real. The eye of man is not permitted to look upon the workings of the Christian soul - to see his many sighs and regrets over his sins his bitter and increasing conflicts with that stream of corruption within him - the holy breathings of his Spirit after righteousness - his deep solicitude for the cause of religion - his wounded feelings in view of prevailing corruptions and his incessant efforts to subdue remaining sinful desires and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Saviour. But the eye of God observes all these exercises and He records them in the book of his remembrance. To declare these feelings before men would in many instances excite only disgust and ridicule. Those who know not the language of Canaan would take no interest in its sweet and heavenly tones.

When David uttered the text he had this feeling in his heart. His enemies were so callous and violent that he resolved to be silent before them and was dumb with silence and held my peace even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was not within me; while I was musing the fire burned. Then spake I with my tongue. He spoke to the Lord and not man. His meditations had enkindled a fire within him which could no longer be restrained and led him to pour forth his sorrows to God. He besought the Lord perhaps indeed with somewhat of a complaining impatient spirit, that he might know the measure of his days and learn how frail he was. (This prayer no doubt tended to humble him and excite within him the Christian graces.) We have in this instance then an example of the power of meditation over the heart and I shall take occasion from the text to exhibit the influence of meditation in promoting the religious and affections and feelings. (And as our Christian character is dependant upon the exercises of the heart. I trust I shall secure the attention of this audience - certainly of my Christian brethren.)

I might be profitable to spend time in explaining the manner in which meditation operates to call into more vigorous exercise the religious affections. The truth is the avenue between the head and the heart is to apt to be closed up and each of them is left to be impressed and more by foreign objects. But reflection opens this communication and the understanding sends down into the heart many births which serve to stir up the dormant affections. The ardour of our feelings is in general proportionate to the distinctiveness of our apprehension of the truths calculated to excite them. And meditation is the way and the only certain way in which correct notions of religious things can be obtained. We may indeed have a transient excitement produced within us by a confused and partial view of truth. But it is a fire that soon goes out after a few flashes. But the fire kindled by those truths that have been thoroughly explored by the understanding burns brighter and brighter until all of the dross is consumed. In order to have our hearts drawn upwards to God we must reason with them. We must present all the arguments before them which the Lord of God and the Spirit of God and the Providence of God furnish and present them too in the most affecting way. God expostulates with men and should our understandings expostulate with our hearts and present every motive before them that is calculated to wean them from an attachment to forbidden objects and to fasten them upon the truth of God's word.

And if we suffer the reasonings of others to have an influence upon us although we can never certainly know but they mean to deceive us shall not our hearts be influenced by our own reasonings which we are certain are sincere? Yet how common is it to find man reasoning like angels and acting like devils.

Sober and persevering religious meditation has also the effect to sweep the affections in more steady and persevering exercise. A momentary view of divine truth may indeed excite a transient and it may be very violent emotion in the heart. But it is meditation alone that can keep the fire alive. This will afford additional fuel and produce a steadily increasing degree of light and heat until the soul feels its earthly and sensual clogs melted away and it long longs and pants for the perfect affection of heaven.

But the most important effect of meditation is that it leads a man to earnest prayer. This was its effect on David and surely the supplication he then presented was fervent. It makes a man see his need of divine assistance: it shows him how poor and wretched he is in himself and how rich and free is the grace of God. He will therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace and in answer to his prayers there will descend from heaven a holy influence to service every languishing grace - to subdue the pride of the heart and melt down the will into a childlike submission - to give an ardent fervency to the love of God and man - to quicken desires after righteousness - and to spread over the soul a holy serenity and joy - a sweet foretaste of heavenly felicity. Strive as the Christian may to cultivate his faculties as he may it is only these influences after all that can cause him to feel and act as he ought (arise and shine clear as the sun fair as the moon and terrible as an army with banners). These inspire the Christian (him) with the strength of Sampson so that the cords of his sins in which he is borne are severed like burnt flax and he slays his enemies by thousands.

But to dwell no longer on the mode in which meditation tends to arouse and strengthen the religious affections and feelings I proceed to a more profitable part of the subject by exhibiting the particular train of reflection through which these affections are brought into more vigorous exercise. I begin with the affection of love.

*And now abideth faith hope charity, says Paul, but the greatest of these is charity.* By charity he means that principle of holy love which is implanted in every regenerated soul. It is greater than faith and hope because it lies at the foundation of them and of all that is good in the believer. Faith and hope in some respects will cease with our present state of being but *charity never faileth*. This love in the Christian soul maybe distinguished into three kinds - the love of complacency - the love of gratitude and the love of benevolence. The first implies a delight in the nature or character of the object one loves - the second is that affection produced in us by a sense of favours conferred and the last is an ardent desire to communicate that happiness we enjoy to those who are in misery or exposed to severe calamities.

In the first place then what are the meditations that strengthen the love of complacency - or a delight in the character of God and all holy beings? For this kind of love does not extend in perfection to any other holy beings. (Evil beings have indeed a sort of complacency in one another's characters: but the soul of the Christian can have no permanent delight in anything by God or in whatever bears his image.)

In order to strengthen our love for the character of God we may contemplate his works of creation. In this employment it seems the holy men of old spent much of their time and while they were musing the fire burned and they cried out *O Lord how manifold are thy works! The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament sheweth his handy works. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. I meditate on all thy works. I muse on the works of thy handd. Great and marvelous are thy works Lord God Almighty. In wisdom hast thou made them all!* Consider the sun how glorious in his

course the moon how beautiful in her silver glory the stars how changing in their evening splendour! Ten thousand worlds are rolling nightly over our heads moving with a velocity we cannot conceive yet all is harmonious no clashing no interference no confusion. And yet how simple the laws by which they are guided. Those little irregularities of their motions which we might be tempted to call disorder and which seem to us to threaten the final ruin of the whole universe are in part the very means God has adapted to give permanency to the motions and to prevent forever all derangements until his will shall cause them to fall down from their places. Here is a display of wisdom which delights the soul - of power which astonishes and of goodness which ought to awaken love.

Look also at the various works of creation around us on earth - the vegetable animal and mineral kingdoms. What admirable adaptations of means to ends - what wisdom beauty and benevolence are exhibited in all of these productions of the Creator. Apart from the sin of man how delightful is this habitation in which we dwell. This carpet under our feet this canopy over our heads these fine prospects around us - this musick and exquisite countenance on every side in every animal in every plant. Not a leaf that flutters in the breeze not an animal that walks on the ground or bird that flies in the air, or fish that swims in the sea whose organization does not discover more wisdom than the most boasted production of art. And as the works of this God, my soul, so lovely, so beautiful, so wonderful! What then must he be himself! If in these limits of his creation presents he sends forth so many rays of glory which shine so brightly through the wastes and rubbish of sin what must it be to behold him in heaven, the centre of his dominion - what displays of himself a thousand times more effulgent and engaging!

Contemplate too God's works of Providence. How he watches over all the works of his hand with unearned solicitude. While his eye is directed continually upon the highest archangel around his throne and his arm stretched out for his defense and happiness alike watchful is He over the insect that floats unseen to mortal eyes in the atmosphere we breathe. While men act daily and hourly contrary to his will yet does he supply their returning wants and uphold them in the defenseless hours of sleep and guard them from a thousand seen and unseen dangers year after year. What must be the extent of that goodness which can thus be increasingly active in promoting the welfare not only of holy but of unholy beings! How deserving is such a character of supreme and everlasting affections.

But it is indeed the moral character of God that should excite the most ardent affections. Contemplate then his works of grace. Remember the glorious plan of redemption by the incarnation sufferings and death of his only begotten and dearly beloved Son. Here do we behold an overwhelming display of the divine justice and mercy. His justice forbade that men should be pardoned until till it had received satisfaction while his mercy could not let him perish in his sins. Wonderful contrivance! The Son of God is made to satisfy the justice of God by his own (most evil) death upon the accursed tree so that God can now be just while he justifies the believer in Jesus! What a display in this work not only of the justice and mercy of God but also his holiness! And can our souls avoid loving with increasing affection the character of such a God! How perverse must be our taste - how smothered and dead every generous feeling if a review of such deeds of mercy does not raise our conceptions of his character and fan up the embers of holy love into a flame. If such an object as the character of God of creation and grace as exhibited in his works of creation providence and grace does not kindle an ardent affection within us there is a total and all pervading Spiritual death brooding over our souls. Surely if we are Christians while we muse the fire will burn.

And those same meditations which produce and increase the love of complacency towards God will excite a like love towards Christ and the Holy Spirit. All the names in scripture that are given to God (except that of Father) are applied to Christ - and most of them to the Holy Spirit: see the attributes

ascribed to God and likewise ascribed to Christ and most of them to the Holy Spirit and most of the works which God is said to perform are likewise imputed to Christ and the Spirit. *There are therefore three that bear record in heaven the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost and these three are one.* To meditate upon the character of God the father is therefore to meditate upon the divine nature of the two other persons of the Trinity.

So that an increase of pious affection towards God the father is in fact an increase of the same towards Christ in the Spirit. Agreeably to this Christ hath told us, *that all men should honor him, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father.*

The persons of the Trinity however have exhibited to the view of man something peculiar to each, which is calculated to give us a forcible impression of the supreme everlasting excellence of their respective characters. God the Father is represented in scripture as originating devising and superintending the wonderful works of man's salvation. God the Son as voluntarily submitting to the humiliation and suffering which the works of redemption demanded and God the Spirit as finishing the work by convicting converting and sanctifying the chosen people of God. So much of disinterested love piety and forbearance is exhibited in all these offices that the pious soul cannot meditate upon them without having an increased feeling of complacency excited within it not only for the Father but also for the Son and the Spirit while the fact that their essential nature is the same will prevent all confusion in the object or degree of love rendered to each.

Were there time I might exhibit that train of thought by which a complacency in the character of angels and of Christian brethren is brought into more lively and vigorous exercise by meditation. But leaving this to you reflections I would direct your thoughts to those things that ought to excite in its highest degree the love of gratitude in your bosoms.

And since God is the source of all the mercies we enjoy to him should we render the supreme affection of hearts penetrated with a sense of his goodness. This is a theme on which the sacred writers delight to dwell. In the midst of all his trials and hours of darkness how often do the feelings of the Psalmist break forth into a song of triumph and gratitude! calling on all things in heaven and earth animate and inanimate to praise the Lord. Hear too the strong language of Habakkuk. *Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.* You remember too how Paul and Silas when bound in prison Phillippi arose at midnight and sang praises to God. And indeed there is never a time in the Christian's life when he has not abundant occasion to sing a song of grateful praise to God. He may be in excruciating pain - he may be bowed down with deepest affliction - he may have death staring him in the face: but the single fact that God has reconciled him to himself by the cross of Christ is enough to fill his soul with everlasting Thanksgiving. Always has the Christian reason to say to God

*O thou most bounteous giver of all gifts  
Thou art thyself of all thy gifts the crown  
Give what thou wilt without thee we are poor  
And with thee rich take what thou wilt away.* [Source: Poem by William Cowper, 1785]

When God first had mercy on the Christians he was an enemy to the divine character and under the curse of a broken law whose penalty was blackness and darkness forever. He resisted to every effort God made to save him and it was not till the Spirit overcame his opposition that he had any sense of the

value of the gift of salvation or any love to God or to anything else that was holy or heavenly. No wonder then the apostle should explain, *Behold what manner of love, etc.* In comparison with this all other gifts are small. Your gratitude therefore Christian should for this be proportionably great. Let all trials and sorrows be forgotten when you recollect the fact that you are a child of God. Meditate upon what God your Father has done for your deliverance from sin. Grace your Saviour from the throne of highest glory to the cross of deepest shame and see how long this Spirit strove with your proud heart ere you yielded to his voice and say is not here a field wide enough to employ your soul forever. Is not here enough to cause our heart to overflow with gratitude to the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit? O while you muse the fire must burn. If you hold your peace the very stones will cry out. Let it be then our daily delight my brethren to meditate upon what God has done for our souls. Let us love him because he first loved us. O come let us sing into the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our Salvation. O sing into the Lord a new song for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.

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At Deerfield April 1838

At Amherst College July 1854

## Sermon 181 Christians Members of Christ

[Sermon No. 181, "Christians Members of Christ" Ephesians 1:23, 1823 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 1]

Ephesians 1:23

*Which is his body.*

There is not in the whole new testament a more striking figure than that which represents the church as the body of Christ. This is the figure used in the text as will be obvious by repeating the context – *And hath put all things under his feet* (that is God has put all things under the feet of Christ) *and gave him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.* This same figure is several times employed by the apostle Paul. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Ephesians he says – *speaking the truth in love (we) may grow up into him in all things which is the head even Christ: From whom the whole body fitting joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body into the edifying of itself in love.* In like manner he speaks to the Colossians of *not holding the head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together increaseth with the increase of God.* To the Romans also he says, *For as we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office. So we, being many, are one body in Christ.* Christ is represented in these passages as the head of the body because the head is always regarded as the seat of the Soul – which is the controlling and animating principle of the body. By the term body he does not mean merely the trunk: but all the material parts of the frame. For in his Epistle to the Corinthians when he expatiates upon this figure he speaks of the eye and ear as members of the body. Hence then we may conclude that he intends to represent to us that the church constitutes the whole bodily frame of which Christ is the soul – the animating and controlling Spirit. This beautiful and instructive figure may afford us profitable matter for meditation around this communion board.

In the first place how finally does this figure illustrate the oneness of the church!

In the Epistle to the Corinthians already referred to Paul illustrates and amplifies this point so forcibly as to arrest the attention of every child of God. For says he *as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also in Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body: is it therefore not of the body? If the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were they smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. God hath tempered the body together having given more abundant honor to the part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.*

From this interesting and minute expansion of the figure under consideration although but partly quoted the different members or denominations of Christ's church may learn what ought to be their

feelings and conduct toward one another. That is all such denominations as acknowledge one another to belong to the true church of Christ. If those of one denomination suppose another denomination to maintain opinions are to be guilty of practices inconsistent with their being a Christian church there is nothing in these extracts applicable to them. But there are numerous denominations who allow each other to be Christian churches differing in some things but not in fundamentals: and what is the lesson such ought to learn from this figure? Let the apostle reply, *that there should be no schism in the body*. They are nothing more than different members of an individual body and although they differ in appearance and modes of action yet the same blood circulates through them all and the same Spirit. The Spirit of Christ animates them all. Do you ask then how they ought to conduct towards one another? Surely with Christian affection tenderness and charity. How unnatural for the different members of the same body to set up a contest among themselves - for the hearts and the feet or the eyes and the ears to be at war! Not less unnatural is it for different denominations of Christians to be at war. And how shocking the idea that these different seats should in many instances refuse to one another Christian fellowship - refuse to admit one another to a seat at the table of the Lord! Who ever saw a man whose hands attempted to stop the circulation of the blood through the feet! Or whose eyes endeavoured to exclude the vital air and warmth from the mouth and ears! Just as absurd is it for the different members of Christ's body to exclude one another from the communion table. The wine there poured out is a part of the blood and the bread broken a part of the flesh of Christ and one member has the same right to it as another. I approach the communion table you have spread and enquire whether you regard me as a Christian as giving evidence of a new heart? You answer that you are willing to acknowledge this; but you differ from me in some things of importance and therefore I cannot be admitted to a seat at the board. Brethren that difference between us cannot extend to fundamentals since you acknowledge that I give evidence of being a new creature in Christ Jesus. You answer that it does not but still refuse me a place at the Lord's supper. But I demand a seat there - in the name of the Lord Jesus I demand it. For I am a member of the body of Christ by your own acknowledgment and therefore have an equal right with yourself to a place there. It is not your table: it is the table of Christ. He has spread it for me as well as for you and if you shut me out from its blessing you do it at your peril. *Now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Why dost thou judge thy brethren? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

I rejoice my brethren that these remarks are not applicable to us as a church. For it is our practice to admit to our communion every man who maintains what we believe to be the essentials of the Gospel and who leads a life conformable to the religion of Jesus. The grand enquiry with us is not whether he be a Congregationalist or a Presbyterian an Episcopalian or a Moravian a Baptist or a Methodist but whether he be *a new creature in Christ Jesus*. And if satisfied of this we receive him to our communion as one whom Christ has received.

From the figure under consideration the individual members of a church may learn what is their relation and what ought to be their feelings towards one another. A more forcible picture of harmony and mutual love could hardly be presented to us. The individuals of the church are merely different members of the body of Christ - and unless Christ be divided they ought not to be. How strange an object that man's body be whose hands manifested such a hatred towards the mouth as to refuse to convey to it the food necessary to their own subsistence or whose mouth was so hostile to the other members that it would not receive the sustenance the frame demanded or whose eyes would not open to discern dangers and obstructions through enmity to the feet! But just such a picture as this is exhibited to the eye of God by that church whose members bite and devour one another and are hostile in their feelings. In the human frame when one member is weak or wounded how readily do the other



members suffer with it and cheerfully perform the offices devolving on it when strong! And thus sympathetic and mutually accommodating and helping ought we to be my brethren towards one another. Is this the case with everyone of us? Do we all feel towards one another that harmony and sympathy the different members of the same body exhibit? If such be not the fact in the words of Paul I must say, *ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* And what is the character of the carnal mind? *It is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh* (that is carnal) *cannot please God.*

In the second place the figure in the text furnishes the professor or religion with a striking touchstone by which he may test his conduct.

I have already remarked that in accordance with this figure the individual members of the church may be considered as merely different members of the body of Christ. I will now pursue this farther and represent an individual professor as constituting various members of the body of Christ. And when that representation is made each of us has only to suppose himself the individual professor and then enquire whether his conduct corresponds to what would in given circumstances be the conduct of Christ.

I will first suppose an individual professor of religion to constitute the general countenance of Christ.

Carry then in your imaginations my hearers the impression that when you look on him you look upon the face of Christ. Now it is well known that the countenance is an index of the heart and that the varied hues and lines of expression upon it are strong indications of the temper and feelings. But I look upon the professor and he is transported with rage. His eyes are red with fury his nostrils are expanded his sinews are stiffened his hands are clenched and bitter and spiteful words are poured from his foaming mouth. A fellow mortal has insulted him and they seem ready to tear one another in pieces like hungry wolves. And is this the countenance of that Jesus who when he was misled reviled not again *who was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth?*

But our surprise is raised still higher when we look still closer and perceive that both these men who are thus contending with one another are professors of religion! That is both profess to be members of Christ's body and to be actuated by Christ's Spirit - *whose fears whose hopes whose aims are one.* And is this really an exhibition of the Spirit of Christ? How happy will these men be to meet in heaven with such a Spirit as this!

I look down upon this professor of religion whom I have supposed to represent the countenance of Christ. And the marks of anger have disappeared. But what is that dark and speechless lowering that remains upon his countenance! It is a spirit of hate towards his fellow man. He has been injured and will not forgive: may he meditates revenge. He determines to bring the offender to punishment by the civil law and to carry that same lowering countenance into the court of justice. And think you he will there remind his judge of Christ before the Pilates are? Will he prove a good representative there of the Spirit of the Gospel? What if his judge should chance to recollect the prayer which Christ offers for his enemies on the cross. *Father forgive them!*

In the second place suppose a professor of religion to represent the ear of Christ.

Let us go and listen to the conversation of the social circle where this professor is and see if we can recognize anything of the Redeemer there. You observe him listening with curiosity to the slanderous

report that is there detailed against his neighbour - or the details of worldly business the best mode of increasing the property or gratifying the palate or to the history of state politicks or to the bloody story of war or the superstitious tales of fortune telling necromancy legerdemain or any other legend - or drinking in the phantoms of romance or the gross stream of obscenity. But when the subject of religion comes up how dull the ear of this professor! I witness him too closing his ears against the cry of misery - and remaining death to all the pressing and awakening calls that the benevolence of the present day is making upon him. Such are the evidences he gives that he is indeed a member of the body of Christ and animated and controlled by his Spirit. And it is to be feared brethren that very many of us give no better evidence than this.

Thirdly suppose a professor of religion to represent the eye of Christ.

And what were the objects on which the eye of Christ when on earth were most prone to fasten? First of all they were directed to God in ceaseless prayer. But when I observe this professor living day after day and scarcely raising a prayerful look to heaven - when I see him for the slightest reason abandoning this house of prayer - rarely entering the conference room - never coming to the monthly concert - I conclude either that the character of Christ must be wonderfully changed or this man is not a member of Christ.

The next thing that attracted the eye of Christ were objects of distress. Never when he met them did he pass them with averted looks: but on the other hand he searched for them. Especially did Spiritual misery open his eyes wide to examine its extent and its remedies. When he could afford relief his eyes brightened with joy: but when he saw the deal the seal of eternal death upon them then they were suffused with tears. *And when he was come near he beheld the city and wept over it.* How very different from all this is the conduct of the professor who closes his eyes to scenes of misery who shrinks from every call of charity and who will not behold the miseries which heathen lands present nor contribute to their relief single dollar nor even read those publications which contain a history of human wretchedness enough to melt the heart of stone - and whose concern for sinners around him never yet drew one tear from his eye! Can such an one be a member of Christ?

Another object on which the eye of Christ was often turned with tenderness and love was his disciples whom he condescended to call and esteem as brethren. When therefore I see one professor looking on his brother only with surly and resentful countenance and avoiding his society can it be that he is a member of Christ?

The eye of Christ was also drawn irresistibly and almost constantly towards heavenly things. But when I see the professor gazing with intense and unvaried delight upon the riches honors and pleasures of the world when I see him rushing as if blind into every temptation before him - when I see his eyes wide open whenever worldly things are subjects of conversation or discourse and see those same eyes closed in sleep in this house in the midst of the most glowing descriptions of religion is not the conviction forced upon my mind that I was altogether mistaken when I supposed him to be a member of Christ?

Fourthly - Suppose the professor of religion to represent the mouth of Christ.

It was the testimony of Christ's enemies *never man spake like this man.* But they did not mean that he was a better slanderer a better man to make a bargain to deceive others - to burnish over sin with imposing words nor to teach most successfully any sort of earthly wisdom: but they meant that he was the most able of all teachers in heavenly things. What would these men say were they to hear the

modern professor uttering open slanders or sly insinuations against his neighbor or bantering about a bargain - or condemning with a dogmatical assurance all who differ from him in opinions of little importance - or remaining silent when religion the very faith he professes is attacked by the ungodly! What shall any of us think of that man whose mouth is a channel through which flows the filthy stream of low and obscene stories - or discourse upon some worldly idol or worldly vanity - especially what shall we think of the professing Christian whose mouth refuses to converse upon experimental religion! Can that be the mouth of Christ?

Fifthly let the professor of religion represent the Lord of Christ.

And how unweariedly did that hand when he was on earth labour not for the meat that perisheth but for the glory of God! How was it ever stretched out to the relief of the miserable and to lead the enquiring soul to heaven! And in prayer to God! Why then is it that I behold the hands of this professor clenched so firmly? Oh, there is a call made upon him to test the sincerity of his religion by contributing to benevolent objects. Although he is willing to pray for objects of misery and the conversion of the heathen yet others must afford the pecuniary means for receiving them. He can tell us too of his experience in religious feelings: and although he needs his money and his hands for other purposes than to serve God yet if his feelings are like those of Christ surely he cannot as he fancies be a castaway - I see too in yonder fashionable circle the Christians hands shuffling the enticing and as he thinks merely amusing and harmless cards! And is this a representative of Christ? Were his disciples to revisit the earth would they not be astonished to behold their master's hands thus employed?

Finally suppose the professor of religion to represent the feet of Christ.

Wherever the glory of God of the good of men require they move: but for no other call did they turn aside. They were never made weary in labouring for earthly possessions honors or pleasures any farther than these could promote the glory of God. Can these then be the feet of Christ which I see moving towards the seat of loud and intemperate riot? Can this be the feet of Christ which I see leaping in the sprightly dance of the sound of the viol? Can these be the feet of Christ which are so wearied by worldly pursuits that they are incapable of going to the religious assembly! Reflect my brethren if it does not shock you of Christ making one of a riotous pleasure party of Christ in a ball room - of Christ absenting himself from the religious assembly!

And now may the Holy Spirit of God bring the subject home to each one of our hearts. What I want is my brethren and that we should go away from this communion board with a deep impression that we are each one of us a part of the body of Christ. In all our worldly concerns in all our pleasures let this thought be present to restrain us from doing any thing which Christ would not have done in the same circumstances and urge us to do what he would have done. If this consideration will not be a powerful check upon us when rushing into sin - if it will not powerfully urge us on in the path of duty I know not that any thing will. *We are not our own.* We are a part of Christ - if so be that Christ dwelleth in us. To day we renew our public declaration that we belong to Christ - Oh by the love and the sufferings of that Saviour by your hopes of heaven - by your regard to sinners around you and to the law and character of God I conjure you not to deny this consecration tomorrow.

Delivered

At Conway Nov 1823

At Amherst West Parish Mar 1836

## Sermon 182 Utility of Natural History

[Sermon No. 182, "Utility of Natural History", I Kings 4:33, 1823 Sep,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 1]

*[The following was extracted from a printed version of Hitchcock's original discourse. The original manuscript of Hitchcock's (#182) held in the Amherst College Archives and Special Collections differs only slightly from this version.]*

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[Link to "Utility of Natural History"](#)

### ***Utility of Natural History***

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BEFORE THE BERKSHIRE MEDICAL INSTITUTION,  
AT THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LYCEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY IN PITTSFIELD,

Sept. 10, 1823.

BY REV. EDWARD HITCHCOCK,  
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN CONWAY

PITTSFIELD:

PRINTED BY PHINEHAS ALLEN.

OCTOBER, 1823.

Berkshire Medical Institution,

Sept. 10th, 1823.

REV. EDWARD HITCHCOCK.

Dear Sir,

By a unanimous vote of the members of the Lyceum, we are deputed to present you their sincere thanks for the ingenious and learned Discourse, delivered at the organization of the Society, and to solicit a copy for publication. Permit us to express the personal gratification, which we shall feel, in your compliance with the wishes of all who were present.

With sentiments of high esteem.

Your obedient servants,

H. H. CHILDS,

ORIN WRIGHT.

Conway, 20th Sep. 1823

Gentlemen, in complying with your request, in your Note of the 10th instant, I have only to regret that my Discourse is not more worthy of publication, and of the liberal commendation you bestow upon it; and to beg you to accept my sincere wish for the prosperity and usefulness of the Lyceum, and the Medical Institution with which it is connected, and of the assurance of my respect and high consideration.

EDWARD HITCHCOCK.

Docts. H. H. CHILDS

O WRIGHT

Committee of the Lyceum.

## A DISCOURSE

I KINGS, 4:33

*And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.*

*[This sermon was actually a lecture or "discourse" given before a group of scientists and doctors in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. It represents the first formal presentation of Hitchcock's thinking on the relationship between science and religion.]*

To select a text, as the theme of discourse on this occasion, from the holy scriptures, may, at first thought, seem less proper, than to have chosen an appropriate motto from the writings of some eminent modern naturalist. It is not, indeed, to be supposed that Solomon, concerning whom the text was written, or any other mere man whose history is given in the bible, possessed that accurate and extensive knowledge of the natural sciences which has been attained in these latter days. His acquaintance with the vegetable and animal kingdoms was, probably, of a practical character chiefly; and was, no doubt, destitute of the precision, method and minuteness of modern science. For there is no reason for supposing anything supernatural in his knowledge of these subjects. The text means only, that he was acquainted with all that was then known concerning them. Yet on this supposition, we feel as if the example of Solomon, in this respect, were more to be regarded than that of any modern naturalist, however distinguished. For inspiration has pronounced him the wisest of men: and if a part of that wisdom consisted in a knowledge of natural history, it furnishes a presumptive evidence of the value of the pursuit. A man of eminent knowledge might be pronounced as wise by his fellow men, while in the view of heaven his wisdom might be folly; since many things *highly esteemed among men are abomination in the sight of God*. But when Jehovah pronounces any particular attainments to be wisdom, we no longer hesitate to regard them as such. It is always pleasant, therefore, to be able to appeal to the word of God as our authority; and a *thus saith the Lord* is vastly more satisfactory than the uninspired declaration of any man, however eminent.

That Solomon's knowledge of natural history was of a highly practical character, or that he was chiefly conversant with those objects that are useful, rather than with those that are merely curious, is probable from the nature of the case. For in the incipient stages of the natural sciences, immediate utility is almost the only motive to exertion. It is reserved for a more advanced state of knowledge, to devote time and talents to those branches of a pursuit, whose benefit is merely possible and very remote. So long as the field of science is filled with conspicuous and beautiful flowers, it cannot be expected the collector will pass them by, for those that are obscure and unsightly. But it may in this place with propriety be enquired, what fact in natural history, even in its present advanced state, could be uninteresting, or useless, to such a mind and such a heart as Solomon and David and Job possessed? In the writings of all these patriarchs, we have abundant evidence that they were diligent observers and ardent admirers of the works of nature, both in the heavens above and the earth beneath. *Ask now the beasts, says Job, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. The heavens, says*

*David, declare thy glory, and the firmament sheweth thine handy work. O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. I meditate on all thy works, I muse on the work of thy hands.* These holy men applied their knowledge of creation, not only to promote their temporal comfort, but also for their moral and religious improvement. In every object they loved to trace the wisdom and the goodness of God, and with filial confidence to say, *my Father made them all*. From every field of nature that opened before them they inhaled a holy fragrance, and found fresh fuel to feed the flame of devotion on the altar of their hearts. Hence, every new accession to their knowledge served to humble and not to pull them up with the pride of science. For they did not stop to compare their superior attainments with the ignorance of others; but found ample employment in comparing their ignorance with the wisdom of God. And to men who thus applied natural history, we again ask, what fact in that science could be uninteresting or useless? Whether with the eye of a zoologist, they examined the mechanism and habits of the most perfect quadruped, or of the scarcely animated zoophyte; or whether with the eye of a botanist, they gazed on the brilliant ornament of the flower garden, or observed the obscure lichen and moss of the retired precipice; they met with mementos, ever fresh and varied, though essentially the same, of the perfections of God, and felt their love to his character kindling at every step. And this moral influence of natural history is, in fact, the most important of its benefits: and, therefore, we appeal with confidence and pleasure to the example of Solomon and Job and David, while we attempt to exhibit the most interesting relations of this science to the temporal and eternal interests of man. We rejoice to be able to cite their authority as naturalists of a genuine stamp; while, at the same time, we can add, that they were men of eminent piety. What was cultivated by men of such general purity of moral feeling, must, unless perverted, have a salutary tendency. What exerted a healthful influence upon them, is calculated to benefit others.

In pursuing this subject, I propose to consider,

*First:* the Utility of Natural History in relation to the common and social interests of man.

*Secondly:* its Utility in relation to intellectual improvement.

*And Thirdly:* its Utility in relation to religion.

The science of natural history comprehends a description of every material substance, organized and unorganized, animate and inanimate, that exists naturally within, and upon, this globe; including the atmosphere. In other words, it embraces every earthly, material object, that is not artificial. But in order that we may have the subject more particularly brought to recollection on this occasion, I shall just advert to the grand classes of beings and things, that come within the cognizance of this science. The whole forms one connected and beautiful chain, the several parts of which, although varying widely in some respects, yet retain a distinct identity.

At the head of this series is man; whose natural history, appropriately so called, is not extensive; because he constitutes but a single species; and it is with man as an animal only, that this science is concerned. Yet the varieties of our species, whether we contemplate the beautiful lineaments and graceful form of the Caucasian<sup>1</sup>; or the broad olive countenance and diminished stature of the Mongolian; or the dark, woolly, and sun burnt Ethiopian; or the untamed red man of our own forests; or the Malay, with his dark hair and brown features, all these varieties furnish much interesting matter for

the examination of the naturalist; especially as that investigation has a bearing upon the highest interests of the race.

The second link in the descending series of animated beings is the quadrupeds; of which, the species amount to not less than 600.<sup>2</sup> The third link is the feathered tribes; of which, 3000 species have been described. The fourth link embraces the amphibia, or reptiles and serpents; 400 species of which are known to exist. The fifth link comprehends the fishes; including not less than 1000 species. The sixth link is composed of the insect tribe; 20,000 species of which have been discovered. The seventh link embraces those animated and semianimated beings, known by the general name of vermes; such as the various kinds of shell animals, corals, sponges, polypi, and microscopic animalcules that float in air and water; extending, in the whole, to about 4000 species. The eighth link introduces us into the vegetable kingdom; and not less than 44,000 species of plants have already been described; which, in the opinion of the most able botanists, is probably less than half the real number that actually exists on the globe. The last link carries us beyond the region of organized being, and places us in the mineral kingdom; comprehending the great mass of the globe. It furnishes, however, less than 300 species.

All will acknowledge that the field opened to the naturalist is vast, and the objects before him almost endlessly varied. But the *cui bono*, the utility of these pursuits, may not be so obvious. And to this point I invite your attention. I begin with exhibiting the utility of natural history in relation the common and social interests of man.

There is no stronger desire of human nature, and, indeed, of all animal natures, than that of self preservation. And constant experience testifies to the truth of the scriptural declaration, *skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life*. And it is a demonstrative proof that man lives in a state partly penal and partly merciful<sup>3</sup>, that while pain and death are commissioned to ravage the world and to convert it into a vast Golgotha, so many remedies to alleviate distress, to heal diseases, and to stay the uplifted arm of the king of terrors, are placed within the reach of human sagacity. The box of Pandora has, indeed, let loose a deluge of miseries upon our fallen race: But we are not left so destitute as the poets would have us believe. Something more than hope remains. Hope, however ardent, cannot resist the power of disease, nor delay the stroke of death. But medicine is permitted, in thousands of instances, to achieve such victories. And the weapons with which she has performed and continues to perform these important services for mankind, are entirely derived from the vast storehouse, of natural history. From the three great kingdoms of nature, the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal, the *materia medica* is supplied. Before natural history was cultivated as a science, the remedies employed were very limited and imperfect, while many a fanciful and superstitious virtue was attributed to them. But when ingenious men began to invent methods of distinguishing different substances from one another, and of ascertaining their true nature, the superfluous mummery attached to the subject, gradually disappeared; those remedies, whose efficacy was merely imaginary, were rejected; and others, of real value, brought to light. Every subsequent improvement in natural history, or its kindred sciences, was accompanied by a correspondent improvement in the Pandects of Medicine. Especially, when the light of the new Chemistry was shed on the world, its beams fell powerfully upon the fields of natural Science, disclosing a thousand new objects; and they were reflected, with a healing and purifying power, upon the science of medicine. But improvements in the remedies for disease, have not yet reached their limits. The annals of medicine, indeed, testify, that new ones are yearly brought to light. And who does not perceive the field of discovery to be wide and fertile? Especially does it promise a rich harvest in this country, where the virtues of so few natural native products have been unfolded. The



hope of discovering a Panacea, has, indeed, long since been abandoned by all men of real science, along with the quadrature of the circle and perpetual motion; nor can we expect, with the physicians of the fifteenth century, that improvements in medicine will restore antediluvian longevity to our race. Inspiration has declared *the days of our years to be three-score years and ten; and that death must pass upon all, because all have sinned*. Yet God always has added a blessing to the efforts that have been made to improve the science of medicine, and thus to prevent premature death, to mitigate pain, and to rescue the victim from the grasp of many an unrelenting disease. And, as already observed, there is every reason to believe, that in the extensive kingdom of nature, thousands of remedies lie concealed to reward the researches of the scientific physician and to cause the hearts of unborn millions to sing for joy.

Does anyone reply to all this, by saying that a medical man may become acquainted with the remedies natural history develops, without becoming an adept in the science? So might the preacher of the Gospel perform the duties of his office to general acceptance, who is unacquainted with the original languages in which the scriptures were written: and no doubt there have been many such of great usefulness, as there have been probably many physicians of respectable skill, who were ignorant of natural history. But such a divine subjects himself to the charge of receiving his doctrines second-handed, and of depending, in fact, upon fallible men, for what he presents as the infallible oracles of God: and a similar remark will apply to such a physician. Such a divine may be useful without a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek; but he would be more useful with it: and such a physician may be skilful without an acquaintance with natural history; but he would be more skilful with it. A man might perform almost every process in mathematics, who understood not the demonstration of a single theorem: but he could hardly be called an eminent mathematician, so long as he was a mere blind follower of others. And we do not see how a man, unacquainted with natural history, could employ a single remedy that was not actually collected for him by others. For however numerous the medicinal plants and minerals around him, if unable to discriminate one species from another, they would be wholly useless. In such cases, accuracy is of the first importance; and it is dangerous to trust to that general resemblance between different specimens, which strikes every eye, but which may consist with a diversity of properties, and not only specific, but even generic character.<sup>4</sup> The difference between two species, indeed, is often so slight as to perplex the most experienced eye; although the one may be salutary, and the other deadly poison. And there is reason to fear, that were the dead permitted to speak, many an untimely victim of the grave, might execrate the ignorance which could not distinguish the bane from the antidote.

I can hardly avoid remarking in this connection, that what has been said of the importance of a knowledge of natural history to the physician, applies with still greater force to the science of chemistry. For it will hardly be doubted, as a distinguished writer has observed, *that modern chemistry has done more in twenty years for medicine, than all the united labors of preceding ages*. Indeed, without a knowledge of it, must not the physician be entirely ignorant of the nature of the remedies he administers? a deficiency so great and glaring, few at this day will not blush to acknowledge it.

But this is digression. Perhaps too an apology is due for the introduction of so much in this place that relates almost exclusively to the medical profession; coming, as it does, from one who makes no pretensions to a knowledge of that profession in any of its details. But less than this could hardly have been said, if any justice were done to the first head of this discourse: And so long as the speaker confined himself to general principles, to those that form a part of the *commune vinculum* of the

sciences, he thought he should not be accused, on such an occasion, and before such an audience as this, of arrogance; or of *darkening counsel by words without knowledge*.

There is another respect, besides furnishing the physician with remedies, in which the cultivation of natural history may conduce to the preservation and recovery of the health. We live in a day when there is a wide spreading complaint, especially among literary men, of debilitated constitutions and premature decay. Those Protean maladies, known by the name of nervous diseases, although scarcely in existence two centuries ago, now constitute, according to a respectable writer,<sup>5</sup> two thirds of the complaints of civilised society; and they exert an alarming and paralyzing influence, not only upon the comfort of individuals, but also upon the interests of learning. The literati of these days look with amazement upon the ponderous folios of other centuries, and sigh over the degeneracy of their constitutions<sup>6</sup>. Now it is well known, that in most instances these baneful disorders are induced and fostered by the neglect of proper and vigorous exercise. And if this is well known, why do not those of sedentary habits, while in health, improve by the dear bought experience of others, and not suffer their constitutions to fall a prey to inaction? In most cases the reason undoubtedly is, that no sufficiently powerful motive is presented to them to adopt an energetic and systematic plan of exercise. Their studies, or their soft couches, present vastly stronger attractions, than the untrodden glen, or the rough mountain. But were they to acquire a taste for natural history, this motive to exercise would be supplied. Their morning and evening walks would not be terminated by the limits of the smooth shaven green: nor would they, as the majority of literary men now do, carry abroad with them their studies or their cares, and thus counteract the benefits of their exercise, and have but little interest excited within them by the richness, variety, and beauty of creation: But every newly opening flower; every passing, or glittering insect; and every rock along their course, would excite a lively interest; banish care and laborious study; allure them with quickened steps into the pathless valley; along the margin of the stream, or the lake; through the deep and Solitary forest, and up the steep and rocky mountain: And many a time would they hail the beams of the rising sun from the top of the lofty precipice; survey with keen relish the landscape below; listen to the mingled sounds of industry and nature; drink in the sweet and invigorating breeze of the morning, and thus prepare themselves to engage, at the proper season, with renewed vigor, in professional studies or duties. Such a course might not, indeed, in every case eradicate or prevent disease; but such would certainly be its salutary tendency.

The objects that present themselves to the researches of the naturalist are so numerous and varied, that he is fed almost continually with novelty; and thus a deep and lively interest is excited in his pursuits. Now could a taste for such studies be infused into the leading members of society, especially among the young, would it not lead to a more diligent improvement of time; and tend to banish from conversation, much that is frivolous, and much that is criminal! How much better would it be for morality and the peace of society, if much of the breath that is now devoted to retail the slanderous report, to excite local prejudices, and to dissipate the mind, should be spent in discussing and unfolding the beauties and glories of the Creator's works! How much better, if that time, which is now worse than wasted in sighing and weeping over the false pictures of romance, could be consecrated to scanning the realities of nature! And the records of science testify, that where once a taste for natural history has been imbibed, there is a charm in the study of it, strong enough to subdue the love of frivolity, slander and fiction.

Natural history tends, likewise, to increase, in its votaries, a love of country. The fields over which we have wandered, the valleys we have explored, and the mountains we have climbed, will always be dearer to us than any other fields, any other valleys, or any other mountains. It is truly astonishing, how

vividly the recollection of a particular mineral or plant is associated, in the mind of the mineralogist or botanist, with the scenery of the spot where they were first collected by him. There is a bewitching charm, too, in that spot, that causes him, ever afterwards, to look back upon it with a sort of affection.

Were there time on this occasion, I might exhibit the numerous accessions that are often made to a nation's wealth, strength and glory, through the agency of natural history. It is her province to explore and bring to light the internal resources of a country; and then chemistry, her handmaid, stands ready to convert them into materials of public utility. For illustration of this remark, I might appeal to the coal, lead, tin, chalk, and other mines of England; to the iron mines of Sweden and Russia; to the German and Spanish mines of mercury; to the salt mines of Spain, Poland, Hungary and England; to the precious mines of Mexico and South America; or to the lead, coal, and gypsum of the United States.

Many of the important arts of life, especially agriculture, have an intimate connection with natural history: But upon this fertile subject time will not permit me to enlarge.

And finally, the pursuit of natural history furnishes, to say the least, much innocent recreation and pleasure. Relaxation from their duties and studies, is required by all who are active and faithful: and it is an important point gained, when the nature of our amusements is such, that while the body is invigorated, the mind and the heart shall not be corrupted. In most of these recreations that are purely artificial, there lurks some secret poison; and where they bring us in contact with society, the ingenuous mind and pure heart are apt to be pained, and to lose a part of the benefit and the pleasure, by the exhibition, in some shape or other, of human depravity. But when nature is explored, merely as a source of pleasure, and not from a restless desire of distinction, we enter a field entirely abstracted from human passions and contests, and seem to breathe an atmosphere of innocence and peace. There may be earthly pleasures more extatick, but none are more calm and unadulterated, than the naturalist feels, when bursting away from a busy world, he roves through the dark imbowering woods; traces the murmuring stream through the solitary glen, or over the rocky precipice; and mounts the *cloud capt* mountain. With ardent curiosity he scans the varied flowers; seizes the curious mineral; observes the brilliant insect tribes, and listens to the tuneful birds. How the scene soothes every tumultuous and anxious feeling in his bosom, harmonizes every power of his soul, and if he be a Christian, awakens a deep felt adoration and love of that God, whose glory and wisdom and goodness seem to breathe, like holy incense, from every object around him. Then is he able to rise and share in the inspiration of the poet:

*O Nature, how in every charm supreme!  
Whose votaries feast on raptures ever new!  
O for the voice and fire of seraphim,  
To sing thy glories with devotion due!*

*Secondly.* I proceed to consider the utility of Natural History in relation to intellectual improvement.

And I trust I shall speak the sentiments of every enlightened man, when I say, that this pursuit is well fitted to improve and refine the taste. It is not necessary, in order to prove this, to discuss, or decide those difficult questions that have been long agitated, concerning the nature and foundation of taste. For all acknowledge it to be a faculty progressive and improvable; and that nature, or the works of God, are the best of all models and the final standard, so far as they can be employed. And it is with nature—with unadulterated nature—that natural history is conversant. Individual instances, indeed, occur in the

kingdom of nature, of distortion and disproportion. But these are easily distinguished and not liable to pervert the taste. In general, the workmanship of nature is perfect—perfect in form, and attitude, and aspect—perfect in her separations and in her groupings—perfect in her proportions, and perfect in her symmetry. This cannot be said of the most finished human production. The most the artist can do, is to approximate to nature; and the more thoroughly he has studied the models the works of creation present, the more chastened will be his taste, and the nearer to perfection will he attain.

We can conceive, too, how the literary taste may be improved in the same way. An examination of the works of nature, shows her in everything, to be either sublimely or beautifully simple. Hence the student will learn to relish such simplicity in literature; and to reject what is gaudy and meretricious. A boundless field, also is opened in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, rich with fine illustrations and figures. If it be objected to such, that they would be obscure to most readers; certainly this objection lies with equal weight against those derived from pagan mythology, of which the literature of the last century is full.

If there be, then, so much in the works of God around us, to improve and gratify the taste; I pause here to ask, why it is, that so few take an interest in their beauties? There is no one, whose gaze will not be forcibly attracted by the appearance of a splendid mansion, or equipage, or any pageant of art. But let him turn his eye from these, to the expanse of heaven; or let him examine the minutest flower under his feet; or the obscure moss and lichen; or even the mushroom of a night, and what seemed magnificent in the works of art, now becomes diminutive: what seemed symmetrical, appears disproportionate, what seemed beautiful, becomes deformed. I would not depreciate the works of art: I ask only, why it is, that the few works of man, confessedly imperfect and inferior, should engross so much attention, while the ten thousand exquisite beauties God has scattered in such profusion along our every day paths, should excite scarcely no interest, and be trodden under foot unheeded. We deprecate the stupid barbarity of the Turk and the Arab, who can stand amid the ruins of Athens and Palmyra, and have not one spark of curiosity excited within them to know the origin and the authors of the broken walls and columns strewn around them: and instead of admiring the beauty of the workmanship, can deliberately mutilate the rich cornices, friezes and pedestals, for the sake of an insignificant pecuniary profit. But let us hold our peace concerning the Turk and the Arab, if we can live uninterested year after year, in the midst of the glorious temple of nature in which Jehovah has placed us, where we behold, not mere fragments, but every part of the edifice, formed by an Almighty and all Wise Architect, standing forth in unclouded perfection, beauty and grandeur, and fitted to awaken the most ardent curiosity and deepest admiration of an incorrupted taste.

*O how canst thou renounce the boundless store  
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields!  
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,  
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;  
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
And all that echoes to the song of even;  
All that the mountains sheltering bosom shields,  
And all the dread magnificence of heaven;  
O, how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!*

If there be any truth in these remarks, we need not wonder that we often witness in the naturalist, an attachment to his favorite science, more enthusiastic and devoted, than in any other pursuit. If the painter and the sculptor immerse themselves for months and years in the academies, galleries and churches of Rome, Florence, Paris and London, to study and admire and catch the spirit of ancient masters in their favorite arts, need it be thought incredible, that those, who have been taught to relish the more perfect and varied models the great temple of nature presents, should abandon for a time the abodes of civilized society and penetrate the remotest and most inhospitable climes in search of new beauties? Ought it to surprise us, to trace a Humboldt through the forests and over the mountains of Mexico and South America; or a Saussure amid the threatening glaciers of the Alps; or a Van Buck over the bleak regions of Norway and Lapland; or a Smith,<sup>7</sup> now scaling the lava of Teneriffe, and now following Adanson into the barbarous regions of Africa; or a Brown, plunging into the forests of New Holland, and amid the rich and novel assemblage of natural beauties around him, heedless of the hissing serpent and the prowling hyaena? The hope of acquiring fame may, indeed, be a powerful spur in such cases to the naturalist, as well as to the artist; but it is difficult to account for all his devotedness, without supposing within him a strong relish for the beauties of nature, independent of all selfish feelings.

Concerning the relation of natural history to the reasoning powers, a few words will suffice. In order to exalt the value of natural history, I would not attempt to depreciate the utility of other departments of knowledge. I would by no means represent the study of the natural sciences as calculated to strengthen the reasoning powers, equally with the abstruser subjects of moral philosophy, metaphysics, mathematics, or theology. Let it be granted, that these latter branches ought to constitute the bone and sinew of a system of education. I only ask that natural history may come in to clothe this skeleton with the flesh; and then, let the *belles lettres* smooth the inequalities and give the polish, and the work is finished. Natural History is chiefly concerned with facts; and these, we know, form the groundwork on which reason must erect her edifice: and the cause why so many beautiful castles of her creation have crumbled to dust is, that they have wanted this foundation and been built upon the sand.

Let it not, however, be thought that the study of natural history demands no very vigorous exercise of the faculties. A partial knowledge of this subject may, indeed, be obtained by the mere dint of memory. But that sagacity which can seize upon, fix, and body forth in language, the essential character of a genus or species, belongs to no contemptible rank in the scale of intellect. In botany, for instance, there are not less than 44000 species, each of which must be distinguished from all others; and to do this briefly and neatly, is not an achievement within the power of ignorance or dullness. And especially does it demand comprehensive views and strong powers of ratiocination and combination, to be able, from a confused mass of fact, to invent a system that shall embrace and reduce to order nil that is known and all that will be discovered in the science. Indeed, we cannot but believe, that had the intellectual powers of such men as Linnaeus, Tournefort, Jussieu, Cronstadt, Werner, Haüy and Cuvier, been turned into the channel of mathematics, they would have run parallel with those of Newton, Leibnitz, Euler, and La Place; or in the philosophy of mind, with Locke, Reid, Hume, Stewart and Brown; or in moral philosophy, with Paley; or in theology, with Calvin, Edwards and Dwight.

Thirdly: I proceed to consider the utility of natural history in relation to religion.

I have already alluded to the favourable influence of these studies upon the devotional feelings. They unfold to the Christian, a minute and thorough knowledge of the works of his heavenly Father, and

disclose ten thousand new and unthought of beauties and glories. And he can scarcely avoid inhaling a portion of that warm and holy incense, which forever rises towards heaven from the altar of nature; nor refuse to join in that ceaseless song, which is chanted by creation in full concert, without a discordant note, to the praise of Jehovah. Whenever David, or Job, or Solomon, looked upon the works of God around them, a holy glow of feeling came over their soul, along with a sense of their comparative insignificance: and the goodness of God, which shone so bright in creation, gave new energy to their faith and inspired a firmer confidence in his mercy. The many ardent exclamations concerning the works of God, in the book of Psalms, testify how great was their impression upon the feelings of David. And if a man really love God with the love of complacency, how can he be indifferent to those displays of his attributes—I might say, to that transcript of his character—which creation presents? Permit me here to enquire, whether many of the customs and refinements of modern society do not tend very much to divert the attention of Christians from those contemplations upon the material world, that served so frequently to enkindle and invigorate the piety of holy men of old?

But we are not saying in this connection, that devotional feelings are an infallible concomitant of zeal in natural history. Experience, alas, testifies, that a man may be induced by the hope of distinction in these pursuits, or by the mere love of novelty, to traverse the whole globe and to spend his whole life among the works of God that are sublimely great or elegantly little, and yet his icy heart never feel one thrill of devotion, nor any sense of the Divine Presence or Goodness, nor lift one filial prayer to heaven, nor join the creation in a single ascription of praise to Jehovah. But such are Uziah's in the temple of nature—unconsecrated priests—intruders into the sanctuary, to whom it pertains not to burn incense, and to whom there cleaves a moral leprosy; And such instances do not evince that the study of nature's works tends to foster scepticism and pride. They show rather the strength of prejudice, the power of selfishness, and the obduracy of the human heart.

It may however be supposed, that a scientific and particular acquaintance with the minute parts of creation is not requisite for promoting devotional exercises. It is impossible, indeed, to take a general survey of nature, and not be struck with obvious marks of divine wisdom, power and goodness. But it is the examination of the Creator's works one by one, as to their mechanism, relation and object, it is this that makes the deepest and most abiding impression on the memory and the heart. The man whose eye takes in at once the heavens and the earth has a confused and indefinite sense of magnificence, variety and beauty: But he who examines the physiology of an individual animal, or plant, is astonished and delighted at the marks of contrivance, design and benevolence he discovers.

The utility of natural history in demonstrating the existence and attributes of God is rendered sufficiently obvious by appealing to the works of Paley and Gisborne. And the naturalist knows, that many more striking facts than these writers have exhibited, might be drawn from the rich volume of nature.

Natural history has been applied with considerable success to the elucidation of several passages in the holy scriptures. Many animals, plants and minerals are mentioned in the bible, and many allusions are made to natural objects. These it is the business of natural history to identify and describe; and thus to give force, and beauty to many texts, which would otherwise be obscure or unintelligible. To the man acquainted with zoology, ornithology and conchology, for instance, how much more vivid and striking appear the 39th Chapter of Job, and the 104th Psalm: or to the botanist, the frequent allusions to the trees and flowers of Judea: or to the mineralogist, the description of the breast plate and ephod of the

Jewish high priest, and of the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem. But on this subject I cannot enlarge.<sup>8</sup> I proceed to notice some other subjects in revealed religion, to the explanation of which the studies we are contemplating have lent more important aid.

The diversities found among the different tribes of men on earth, in their stature, form and complexion, have long been urged as conclusive evidence of a variety of progenitors; contrary to the representations of scripture, which affirms all men to have descended from one original stock. Here then was a problem for naturalists. And they have zealously undertaken its solution; some with a hope of defending, and some of overthrowing, the scriptural account; and some with great indifference in this respect. The truth seems at length to have been attained: and the conclusion to which the ablest and most candid zoologists have come, is, that *there is no circumstance of difference between the varieties of the human race, which does not appear in a still greater degree among animals, chiefly of the domesticated kinds, arising from the ordinary sources of degeneration.*<sup>9</sup> Thus the reproach, which a hasty and half informed scepticism had cast upon the scriptural account of this subject, has been wiped away by patient research.

A universal deluge of the earth is an event of such magnitude and singularity that we should expect to find traces of it, even after the lapse of a myriad of years, not only in civil, but in natural history. Accordingly, in addition to that mass of evidence that flows in upon us, to prove the occurrence of such a catastrophe in former days, from the histories and traditions of almost every nation and tribe civilized and savage under heaven, we find the records of geology every where speaking the same language. It may be thought that I refer to the numerous organized remains, such as land animals, sea shells, corals and vegetables, that are found imbedded in solid rocks in the highest mountains in almost every part of the world, as proof of the Noachian deluge. It is not strange, indeed, that when such phenomena were first discovered, they should be referred to this cause. But modern geology teaches us that it is contrary to *every rule of physical reasoning* to ascribe them to that convulsion. It is not possible that such immense mountains of fossils, most of them preserving their most delicate and frangible parts and retaining much order in their arrangement, should have been deposited during the one hundred and fifty days of the deluge. It was obviously a slow process, a work of much time, frequently suspended and renewed, and could not possibly have resulted from a catastrophe so violent and transitory as the Noachian deluge. Indeed, so conclusive appears the reasoning on this subject, (which can here only be touched upon) that it is painful to the Christian geologist, that such facts are still referred to as evidences of that convulsion: since an impression is thereby made upon the infidel geologist, that theologians are pressed for arguments to defend the sacred historian<sup>10</sup>.

The proper evidence of the deluge is not to be derived, as already remarked, from the original and regular strata constituting the crust of the globe; but from the accidents those strata have subsequently experienced, the abrasion and excavation of their surface, and the dispersion of the fragments thence broken off and rounded by attrition, obviously through the agency of water, and often mixed with the remains of land animals. These water worn pebbles almost everywhere cover the surface to a great depth, and afford conclusive proof of the Noachian deluge. Do you say they were rounded and carried to their present situations by rivers? But they occur in vast quantities on the tops of the highest mountains, where no rivers ever could have flowed. They must therefore have resulted from some mighty catastrophe by which all the high hills under heaven were covered with water, which the scriptures declare to have happened in the days of Noah. Thus wherever the infidel goes, he finds the very stones crying out against him.

Modern geology has assumed an interesting attitude also in respect to the antiquity of the earth as given by Moses, His chronology in this respect has been almost incessantly assailed from the days of Appion to the present. In the early stages of geological enquiry, every new fact was seized with avidity, as if well understood, and an attempt made to convert it into an engine to batter down the authority of Moses. Hence Cowper says sarcastically,

*Some drill and bore  
The solid earth, and from the strata there,  
Extract a register, by which we learn  
That he who made it and reveal'd its date  
To Moses, was mistaken in its age.*

The present state of the geological objection to the scriptural account of the creation of the world is briefly as follows. The secondary rock strata of the globe, some of which constitute very high mountains, contain vast quantities of shells and land animals deposited in distinct and often successive assemblages, and many of them appear to have lived and died where they are now found, while the rock gradually accumulated around them. Now the objection is, that Moses does not allow time enough for all the phenomena of these depositions, in the six days of the creation.

The truth of this statement in regard to the remains of animals in secondary strata is unquestionable, and no geologist can suppose that immense mountains of rock could have been deposited, without a miracle, in six literal days. It would be a want of candour not to acknowledge that hundreds, not to say thousands of years, were requisite to effect this stupendous work. To reconcile the facts then with the Mosaic account is the problem the Christian geologist has to resolve.

It has already been remarked that to refer this extensive deposition of rocks with their imbedded relics to Noah's deluge is contrary to correct physical reasoning. It is also too late by almost a century<sup>11</sup>, to denominate them a mere *larus naturae*, or to maintain that these rocks were originally created with these remains imbedded, and that the animals they represent never had any real existence. It would be just as correct reasoning to say that the human skeleton one should find in the loose soil a few feet below the surface, never constituted a living man, but was created a skeleton originally; and a principle that leads to such results must surely banish all reason and consistency from our enquiries.

The question then returns how this problem is to be solved and the objection answered. I take the liberty of mentioning briefly three hypotheses<sup>12</sup>, any of which if adopted will resolve the difficulty, and each of which has found supporters among the most distinguished philosophers of the age, some of them learned and pious divines. The first has met with the fewest advocates.

1. Some suppose that the space between the creation and the deluge, being more than 1600 years, afforded sufficient time for the occurrence of all those changes and depositions we discover in the crust of the globe. Upon this hypothesis, the present continents must, in the beginning of the period, have been mostly submerged beneath the ocean, which gradually receded and left its depositions of rocks embracing various kinds of animals.



2. Another supposition adopted by several European divines is, that the periods of the creation, called days by Moses, are not literal days of twenty four hours, but periods of definite and considerable length, during which the secondary rocks were deposited. This figurative use of the term day to denote periods of various length, is not unfrequent in other parts of scripture and indeed in all languages<sup>13</sup>. Ex. gr. Job. xiv. 6, and xviii. 20. Ezek. xxi. 25. Luke xvii. 24 John viii. 56.

3. Others (and these are most numerous) suppose that Moses, after he has described in the first sentence of Genesis the fundamental fact of the original formation of all things by the will of God, may pass in silence a long intermediate state, whose ruins formed the chaotic mass he proceeds to describe, and out of which God in six days arranged the world we now inhabit. On this supposition the organic remains we now discover in the earth were deposited during this intermediate state.

In regard to these hypotheses, especially the last, it may be remarked, that the grand object of revelation is to give us the history of man from his first creation. And concerning the time in which he was formed there exists very little diversity of opinion—geologists of every name, infidel and Christian, generally agreeing, that the voice of nature unites with the history of all nations in testifying to the truth of the Scriptures that man has existed on the globe not more than five or six thousand years. In proof of this, they appeal to the deltas of the Nile, the Po, the Rhine and the Arno; to the moving sand hills of France; to the peat morasses of the north of Europe, and to the steep declivities of mountains all over the world. The question then whether the earth existed for a time previous to the creation of man, becomes a mere speculative enquiry of little practical importance. If any regard it necessary to explain existing phenomena to admit such a previous state, we do not see how it affects the fidelity of the sacred historian at all. For it can never be shown that Moses fixes the exact time of the original creation of the globe, although he does that of the human race. The first verse of Genesis records an independent fact, which cannot be proved to belong to the same period as the events recorded in the subsequent verses.

To the man who is unacquainted with the facts modern geology develops, and who has not patiently and thoroughly examined the subject, but adopted as unquestionable truth the common exposition of the first chapter of Genesis, such views as these may seem the result of a hasty and dangerous criticism. It is true these sentiments have not excited much attention in this country: But it ought to be remembered that they are no longer novel in Europe, nor regarded as the mere wanderings of visionary geologists: and the fact that such divines as Chalmers, Conybeare and Sumner have in whole or in part adopted them, ought at least to obtain for them a candid examination<sup>14</sup>. The marked extravagance of former theories of the earth adopted by geologists, such as those of Burnet, Woodward, Button, Winston and the whole school of Hutchinson, have produced a strong prejudice against everything on the same subject. But the present constellation of European geologists are men of a very different stamp—men whose grand object is the collection of facts, and who are extremely cautious of hypothesis; adopting none, except such as seem absolutely necessary to explain appearances<sup>15</sup>. And in regard to the hypothesis that have been given above relative to the antiquity of the earth, *it does not become us, says one of these geologists, to propose them with any feeling of confidence. It is amply sufficient for our purpose to shew that there exists more than one mode by which the appearances presented by the structure of the globe may be satisfactorily reconciled to the facts recorded by Moses, in order to remove the objection which has been drawn from them.* Let it be admitted that this is shown, and every candid man must regard geology as affording a triumphant support to the sacred historian.

Such are the prominent utilities of the study of natural history. And in view of the subject, I cannot but remark upon the importance of united and systematic efforts for its promotion. Its successful cultivation by solitary and insulated individuals ought never to be expected. These pursuits, above all others, need concentrated exertion. Cabinets of natural history must be formed, which the student may consult, or his knowledge will be extremely vague and inaccurate. In order to form cabinets, such as are attached to these studies must associate. The advantage gained by such associations is not in the simple ratio of the numbers united: but it is nearer to a geometrical ratio: that is, the combined efforts of two produce more than double the effect of an individual; and so on. This principle has long been well understood and acted upon by the scientific world, as the numerous societies in Europe and this country abundantly testify<sup>16</sup>. These have drawn the scattered rays of knowledge into a focus, whose intensity and brilliancy now spread a glory over Christendom, and paint a bow of promise on the cloud of ignorance that hangs over the lands of paganism. A detail of the labors of these institutions cannot be expected on this occasion. Let it stand *instar omnium*, to mention that the transactions of the London Royal Society contain more than 4000 memoirs, and those of the French Academy of Sciences occupy 140 quarto volumes.

The location of a society in this place for the promotion of natural history must be regarded as judicious; especially as it is connected with a Medical Institution, to which, at the present day, it seems a peculiarly appropriate and almost indispensable adjunct. The natural history of New England, in every branch, is but just beginning to be explored; and this lyceum will form a convenient centre from which zealous naturalists may proceed to examine the interesting regions around, and to which they may return laden with the spoils of nature. It needs but the zealous efforts of a few amateurs, and the patronage of all the intelligent, and such an association must live and flourish. Many it is hoped will here be raised up, who will be able to speak of *trees from the cedar to, the hyssop, and of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes*.

To conclude; I remark in view of the subject that has been under consideration, that if the study of that small part of creation this earth presents, yields so much instruction, and pleasure, how enrapturing will be the views of the works of God that will burst on the soul of the glorified spirit in another world! This globe, amid the unnumbered worlds that fill the universe, is but as a grain of sand on the sea shore: Yet we have reason to believe that every portion of the universe is equally interesting with that which we inhabit, and would afford objects equally various and striking: and the examination of all these would open a boundless field and afford a never cloying feast of novelty to the mind. About thirty thousand different species of animals and forty-four thousand species of plants have been discovered and described on earth; and in each individual animal, not to say plant, are not much less than a million of parts. In the universe there are probably more than 2000 millions of habitable worlds. Take now an anatomical survey of an individual animal or plant; and proceed to dissect in imagination the countless millions found on this globe. Proceed to another world, containing probably an equal number of organized beings, and examine all these in the same manner. Advance thus from world to world until you have reached the last of the 2000 millions! And after all this is done, recollect that you have just entered the threshold of creation! What imagination does not sink under an effort so mighty, and feel an overpowering sense of the wisdom and glory of Jehovah! It may indeed be doubted whether the material works of God will be subjects of investigation in another world. But to study and admire the immaterial, if not the material creation, will assuredly constitute a part of the enjoyments and employments of heaven: For it is the song of Moses and the Lamb on mount Zion above, *great and*

*marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.* And if we love the character as well as the works of God on earth, ours will be the privilege and the glory of tuning our golden harps to this elevated song. O where is the naturalist sunk below the dignity of his nature, so dead to the genuine influence of his pursuits, as not to feel kindling within him a holy and ardent anticipation of that blessed state! Is this world notwithstanding all that science and revelation and grace have done, *we see through a glass darkly: but then face to face: now we know in part; but then shall we know even as we are known.* The wisest in this world have reason to lament the feebleness and cloudiness of their conceptions, the thousand obstructions that block up their intellectual course, and the slowness of their progress. But how consoling and animating to look forward, through a Saviour, to that glorious and immortal state, where the field of knowledge will widen and brighten at every step, and from the eternal fountain of truth that flows from the throne of God, the soul, freed from the cumbrous shackles of mortality, will quaff the full and unalloyed streams of science and bliss for ever and ever! *Amen.*

AFTER the delivery of the preceding discourse, several gentlemen from Berkshire and the adjoining Counties formed a Society under the name of the Lyceum of Natural History of the Berkshire Medical Institution, and adopted a Constitution. At a subsequent Meeting of the Lyceum the following officers were elected.

<b>President</b>	CHESTER DEWEY, A. A. S.
<b>Vice Presidents</b>	David Hunt, M. D. Rev. Edward Hitchcock, A. M., J. P. Batchelder, M.D.
<b>Curators</b>	Henry H. Childs, M. D. Dr. O. Wright
<b>Rec. and Cor. Secretary</b>	Henry K. Strong.
<b>Treasurer</b>	Maj. Samuel M. McKay.

The Lyceum have the pleasure of acknowledging the reception of several boxes of Minerals, Shells, Indian Implements, and Animals, from different parts of the country. A respectable Cabinet of Minerals is already collected. The specimens in Natural History are arranged in a room, appropriated to the purpose, in the Medical Institution. Considerable additions are expected from the Class of near eighty Medical Students now attending the course of Medical Lectures. The Lyceum respectfully solicit the aid of gentlemen in increasing their Cabinet of Curiosities.

*Pittsfield, Oct. 18, 1823*

## FOOTNOTES

1. It will be perceived, that in these allusions, the division of Blumenback has been adopted.
2. The numbers given under the several classes, were chiefly obtained by consulting Rees' Cyclopaedia, Clinton's Discourse before the New-York Lit. and Phil. Soc., North American Review, and Cleaveland's Mineralogy. It is obvious that the estimate, in most instances, must be far below the truth.
3. See Gisborne's Testimony of Nat. Theology to Christianity.
4. Ex. gr. Myrrhis claytoni Mx. and Chaerophyllum procumbens L. or Pastinaca sativa L. and Heracleum L. lanatum Mx. or Angelica L. triquinata Mx. and A. atropurpurea L? or Cetraria islandica Ach. and several species of Peltidea: or the eatable and poisonous species of Agaricus. Who, that understands these references, does not see how extremely dangerous it is to trust to the prescriptions of an ignorant *root doctor*!
5. Trotter on the Nervous Temperament
6. We know not whether astonishment or incredulity predominates in the mind of the modern dyspeptic, (and who that follows the fashions of the literary world is not a dyspeptic!) when he reads in his Bibliotheca, that Calvin wrote 120 works; Luther nearly as many; Baxter 145; Cole and Ryman 50 folios each; Prynne 200 treatises, and Origen 6000! At least, we fancy we hear him exclaiming, *credo, quia impossibile est*: or in the words of Horace, with a slight variation, *O dura priorum ilia*!
7. Professor Chetien Smith. See Tuckey's Narrative.
8. On this subject see Harris' Natural History of the Bible; and also a pamphlet by Sir J. E. Smith, entitled, Considerations respecting Cambridge, more particularly relating to its Botanical Professorship.
9. Rees' Cyclopaedia, Art Man.
10. I am happy, on this point, to give the following extract from the recent very able work of Rev. W. D. Conybeare and W. Phillips, Esq. on the Geology of England and Wales. See page 57 of Introduction; all of which is from the pen of Mr. Conybeare. He gives the following reasons for not referring the organic relics found in rock strata to the Noachian deluge.

*1st. Had these remains been brought to their present situation by diluvial currents, they ought to be mingled confusedly together; we ought to have found the same genera and species in the lowest limestones and the highest beds above the chalk; and those remains of land animals which appear undoubtedly to be diluvial, should have been mixed amongst them; but the fact is notoriously otherwise, the organic remains being distributed in distinct assemblages, in such a manner that each formation is characterized by its peculiar assemblage, without confusion or*

*intermixture. No transitory inundation can account for the circumstances of this distribution; they are such as indicate beyond the possibility of reasonable doubt, that the animals imbedded in the strata lived and died in the spots where they are now found, while these continued for a long period under the waters of the ocean; and that they were there buried under successive deposits formed beneath those waters during the progress of many ages. The perfect state of many of the most fragile shells also, proves that they could not have been drifted from a distance by any violent convulsion.*

*2dly. There is every reason, as we have seen, to ascribe the gravel debris derived from the partial destruction of the strata to the action of the deluge; but the strata must evidently not only have been formed, but also consolidated, before solid fragments, such as could have assumed the present form of the gravel pebbles, could have been torn off from them. Now it does not seem within the limits of physical possibility to ascribe the formation of these strata and their consolidation (a process which must have evidently required time) to one and the same transient convulsion with their subsequent partial destruction; this argument becomes stronger when we remember that there are interposed among the strata themselves many beds of similar gravel (for instance beds consisting of rounded fragments of carboniferous limestone associated with the more recent deposits of the second red sand stone) the unavoidable inference is, that the rock whence these pebbles were formed must in every instance have been consolidated before the rock containing them was deposited; yet in the instance before us the deposition of the conglomerate rock must have preceded that of the highest strata, by the whole interval necessary to account for the formation of all the constituent beds of the oolite, sand, and chalk series; and all these again must have been consolidated before they were exposed to the action of the deluge. It matters not whether the time assigned to these effects be comparatively long or short; it seems manifest that a single year must have been totally inadequate.*

For other interesting matter concerning the geological evidence of the deluge, I beg leave to refer to Cuvier's Theory of the Earth, Greenough's First Principles of Geology, and Rev. Professor Buckland's Inaugural Lecture.

11. *The great question now so much controverted in the world, says Dr. Plot in his history of Oxfordshire, written in 1677, was, whether the stones we find in the form of shell fish, be lapidea sui generis naturally produced by some extraordinary plastic virtue, latent in the earth, in quarries where they are found; or whether they rather owe their form and figure to the shells of the fishes they represent, &c.* The Doctor gives seven weighty reasons for believing in the former of these opinions. He had taken it for granted that Noah's deluge was the *only* cause that could have produced the deposition of the remains in question; and perceiving this to have been too transitory for the purpose, he extricated himself from the dilemma by denying these fossils ever to have been possessed of life. In 1708 Scheuchzer published a work entitled, *Piscium Querelae et Vindiciae*, in which the unhappy fishes deplore very pathetically the hard fate they suffer in being degraded to the rank of mere dead matter. However, so late as 1752, M. Bertrand made what the Edinburgh Reviewers call a *last effort* to cut them off from their claims to be

considered animals.

12. See Conybeare and Phillip's *Geology*, etc. p. 59. Introduction.
13. This hypothesis has been ably discussed within a few years past in *Tillock's Philosophical Magazine*.
14. It is obvious that a brief statement of this interesting subject is all that could be attempted on such an occasion. The details, and the reasons of the several opinions advanced, must be omitted almost entirely. I take the liberty however in this note, to present a short extract from the writings of each of the divines mentioned in the text.

*Does Moses ever say that when God created, the heavens and the earth he did more at the time alluded to than transform them out of previously existing materials? Or does he ever say, that there was not an interval of many ages betwixt the first act of creation, described in the first verse of Genesis and said to have been performed at the beginning; and those more detailed operations, the account of which commences at the second verse, and which are described to us under the allegory of days? Or does he ever bring forward any literal interpretation of this history which brings hire into, the slightest contact with the doctrines of geology? Or finally does he ever make us to understand, that the genealogies of man went any farther than to fix the antiquity of the species, and, of consequence, that they left the antiquity of the globe a free subject for the speculations of philosophers. Chalmers' Evid. of Christianity in Ed. Encyclopedia, vol. 6. p. 228.*

*The great subject to which revelation relates, is the Providential history of man: the antiquity of the human race is therefore an essential feature of that revelation; but the questions whether any other state of our planet preceded that in which it became the habitation of intellectual and moral agents, and if so, what convulsions may have happened to it during that state, are points with which it has no direct connection; a perfect knowledge of these could have furnished us no topics calculated either to awaken the slumbering, or to reassure the penitent conscience. Conybeare in Introd. to Geology of Eng. and Wales, p. 59.*

*All that I am concerned to establish is the unreasonableness of supposing that geological discoveries, so far as they have hitherto proceeded, are hostile to the Mosaic account of the creation. No rational naturalist would attempt to describe, either from the brief narration in Genesis or otherwise, the process by which our system was brought from confusion into a regular and habitable state. No rational theologian will direct his hostility against any theory, which, acknowledging the agency of the Creator, only attempts to point out the secondary instruments he has employed.- According to that history, (the Mosaic) we are bound to admit, that only one general revolution of the globe has taken place since the period of that creation which Moses records, and of which Adam and Eve were the first inhabitants. The certainty of one event of that kind would appear from the discoveries of geologists, even if it were not declared by the sacred historian. But we are not called upon to deny the possible existence of previous worlds, from the wreck of which our globe was organized, and the ruins of which are now*

*furnishing matter to our curiosity.* Sumners' Records of Creation, vol. 2. p. 356.

Among those gentlemen in this country, who have publicly maintained sentiments similar to those given above, I trust I shall be pardoned in naming Professor Silliman; who, in his able and eloquent lectures on geology, has been for several years in the habit of illustrating and defending such views of this subject, with all that clear ness and force which experience and accurate knowledge enable him to do: and it gives me pleasure to add, with all that zeal too, with which an ardent attachment to revealed religion inspires him.

15. In proof of this I appeal to the following characteristic extract, which the London Geological Society, embracing many of the first geologists in Europe, have chosen for their motto.

*Quod si cui mortaliuin cordi et curae sit, non tantum inventis haerere, atque iis uti, sed ad ulteriora penetrare; atque non disputando adversarium, sed opere naturam vincere; deiiiue non belle et probabiliter opinari, sed certo et ostensive scire; tales, tanquam veri sctentiarum filii, nobis (si videbitur) sa adjungant.* See- title page to the geolog. Trans.

16. The principal Societies in the United States, embracing the natural sciences in their plan, are the following: Amer. Philos. Soc., Philadelphia: Am. Acad. Arts and Sciences, Boston: Connect. Acad. Arts and Sciences: Linnean Soc. Philad. Linnean Soc. Boston: Amer. Geolog. Soc. Columb, Chemical Soc. Philad. Lit. and Phil. Soc. N. York: Lit. and Phil. Soc. Charleston: Acad. Nat. Sci. Philad. Cabinet of Sci. Philad. Columbian Institut. Washington: School, School of Arts, Cincinnati: Lyceum Nat. Hist. N. York: do. Hudson: do. - Troy: Hist. Soc. N. York; and the Agricult. Soc-Philad.

Delivered

At Pittsfield, Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> 1823

## Sermon 183 Sinners Dreaming

[Sermon No. 183, "Sinners Dreaming," Psalms 73:20; Job 20:8, 1823 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 1]

Psalms 73:20

*As a dream when we awaketh, so Lord when thou  
awakest thou shalt despise their image.*

Job 20:8

*He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found:  
yea he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.  
[This passage has been crossed out]*

*[“Rewritten in 1846” is scrawled across the cover page.]*

This is a description of the fate of the unconverted sinner - of him who sets his supreme affections on the world and neglects the love and service of God. This condition is compared to that of a man in a dream. However high prosperity may exalt him - how bright ever his sun may shine upon him - though he be elevated to the highest seats of honor and his possessions be ever so great - still without God he will find at last his life has been only a dream. All his fancied pleasures and prospects will vanish in a moment like a vision of the night.

The love of this world my hearers has always been the great bar that has kept men out of heaven - no other delusion is so deep and so successful as that which binds them to the inordinate pursuit of worldly honors or riches or pleasures. Against no other sin has God thundered such awful anathemas. And yet the great majority of our race are dreaming on in pursuit of phantoms and suffering the mere visions of earthly pleasure to debar them from the possession of eternal glory. (But we will not therefore ye worldly minded men cease to sound in your ears the loudest warnings we can raise.)

But who are the men that are inordinately attached to the world and are bartering away their souls for a phantom? If we were to judge from the professions and sincere belief of men we should be led to conclude there were no such to be found. For no such person supposes he is seeking worldly interests beyond what reason approves and the necessity of his situation demands. The avaricious man pleads the wants of his family or the fear of future poverty for his excessive eagerness after money. The ambitious man pleads that he can be more useful when more honored and exalted and the sensualist fancies that he indulges himself no more than the mild and all merciful government of God permits. But if we judge from the bible we must conclude that all who have never been regenerated by the special agency of the Holy Spirit are inordinate lovers of the world and are the dreamers who will ere long awake to the terrific reality. For all such are described by the apostle as living according to the course of this world and as bent on worldly pleasures. The truth is the heart that does not love God supremely must have some earthly object to worship. We all love something supremely and if it be not God it must be the world. The figure employed in the text is a lively representation of such. To spend a few moments



in illustrating that figure may not be unprofitable. It is obvious that the Psalmist in the text compares the pursuit of worldly pleasures to a delightful and not to a distressing dream. Otherwise the figure would be of no force. Such a dream therefore I shall refer to in the following illustration.

First then: - In a dream a man is almost entirely under the power of imagination. Reason exerts but a feeble influence and all her efforts are overborne by the power of the fancy. All the vivid objects presented to the mind in a dream are mere phantoms - none of them are real - none of them exist. A person may suppose himself to be quaffing the most delicious drink or eating the choicest food or listening to the sweetest music or inheriting a kingdom and wearing a crown of gold. Still it is all delusion - a mere play of fancy.

And the man who is inordinately devoted to the world is alike under the power of imagination. This is the anticipation of future worldly good that fills his mind and urges him on. Reason under tells him that he shall be disappointed as he always has been: but the picture before him is too vivid and enticing to permit him to listen to reason. The young person although told by his older and more experienced friends that he never will enjoy any real solid happiness in earthly good still fancies that somehow or other he shall escape the general lot and ere long become very happy. But when he comes to the close of life if he die impenitent he will acknowledge that he has been pursuing phantoms all his days. Yet it is a hard lesson to learn - it is one the impenitent never learns till his conversion or his death bed - that the young child who is just beginning to look around upon the world enjoys it better than any one does and that the longer we live the less satisfaction we enjoy in it from mere earthly good. The man who loves the world inordinately either in its riches, honors or pleasures and who is frequently most bitterly disappointed in it always imputes his disappointment to some untoward circumstance which might have been prevented and not to the uncertain and unsatisfactory nature of all earthly enjoyment.

*[Several lines are scratched out]*

Secondly - A man in a dream has no idea that he is dreaming. He has a firm persuasion that every thing he sees and hears is real. He is much agitated and moved in his feelings by the visions that float before him as if they were reality.

Look at the worldly irreligious minded man and do you believe he supposes himself to be dreaming? Would the ungodly farmer labour so unremittingly and wear down his system if he supposed himself to be just living a mere phantom? Would that irreligious merchant undergo as much anxiety and confine himself as assiduously to his business and almost forget to eat and to sleep if he did not believe himself in pursuit of something real? (Would that unreserved mechanic rise up so early and sit up so late and eat the bread of corruptness if he thought himself dreaming?) Would that unsanctified student sacrifice his health to comfort over the midnight lamp if he supposed that the distinguished name to which he is aspiring were a mere floating vision.

*A fancied life in others breath*

*A thing beyond us e'en before our death?*

*[Source: Poem by Alexander Pope, 1733]*

And yet my hearers what is it better than to be dreaming for a man to be fixing his affections on these things and to pursue them as the chief good while he neglects the substantial eternal realities of religion! When death comes he will find that all was a phantom: and what is worse he will find that this phantom has cheated his soul of heaven. Yet if you go to the worldly minded man and tell him of this

though he may acknowledge the importance of religion yet he has no idea that he loves the world supremely. He plans for increasing his prosperity or reputation or learning occupy his mind so much and present so many airy castles that he has no time to look at realities. He sees many others indeed around him richer or more honorable than himself who appear to be dreaming but so long as he remains so much behind these in his exertions he supposes it cannot be that he is in the same state.

Thirdly – Although a man's eyes are closed when he dreams yet he fancies himself to have a more distinct view of objects than when awake. When awake we often find much difficulty in discerning objects either through an excess or defect of light. But when dreaming no such difficulty presents itself and everything around us appears bright and distinct.

The worldly minded man also supposes his mental vision to be unclouded. He prides himself upon his discernment his prudence and his abilities. He fancies himself to be well acquainted with the subject of religion and smiles at the simplicity of many religious people who are made the dupes of priestcraft and frightened into the belief of the most egregious absurdities. He needs no one to teach him on the subject of religion. He has a clear view of it - and also can discern most obviously the many corruptions of religion in the world and the numerous failings of professors. And with such imaginary clear views of the subject this man rests easy until the spirit of God really opens his eyes, and then he truly sees. And the first thing he sees is that he has been in darkness all his life. Once he supposed himself in a spiritual sense *to be rich and increased with goods and to have need of nothing but now he finds that he is poor and miserable and blind and naked*. He now perceives that the light which was in him has darkened and he is led to exclaim how great was that darkness! He prefers that the most ignorant child of God whom he ridiculed and despised is a thousand times wiser than himself and however great his talents he finds such a one able to instruct him in the most important of all knowledge. Those very doctrines which he formally supposed so absurd and contradictory now appear to him fraught with irresistible evidence of their truth.

Fourthly- Dreams often make a deeper impression on the soul than real scenes. All of us can probably recollect the deep and powerful excitement of the feelings when the imagination painted upon our souls some interesting scene in the hours of sleep. Was it a scene of distress? It was distress unmingled. Was it a scene of happiness? It was happiness unmingled. It awakened all our faculties and engrossed them and the painful or delightful remembrance dwelt upon the mind many a month and many a year. The happiness or misery which we fancied ourselves there to taste far exceeded any which real life presents.

And so it is with the votary of the world. The visions of happiness that float before him far surpass anything which religion can present to his mind. Religious things are uninviting and unwelcome. They appear distant uncertain and what is worse disgusting to his taste. The only reason any attention is taken is a fear that he may be lost. He is all activity and zeal in the service of the world: but his ardour languishes when he engages in the duties of religion. Worldly objects worldly occurrences make a distinct and powerful and lasting impression on his heart: they move in agitate his whole soul: they excite the deepest grief or the liveliest joy: but the subject of religion awakens scarcely no interest at all in his bosom. The services of the Sabbath the duties of family and secret prayer and meditation upon religion are dull and tedious in comparison to the pursuits after the money or the fame and meditations upon worldly subjects.

Fifthly a dream indicates a diseased state of the body. The system may indeed be not essentially affected. Still a dream always implies some oppression or derangement or overexcitement of the animal

system. Medical writers agree as well on this point and it is so consonant to our experience that it is unnecessary to dwell upon it.

And so emphatically does a supreme devotion to the world indicate a diseased soul. And it is not a slight affection neither. The very seat of our spiritual life is disordered. A deep and a dreadful malady preys upon the heart. The poison of sin is circulating in the lifeblood of the soul and stupefying all her faculties and perverting the taste and darkening the understanding so that the dreaming sinner *puts bitter for sweet and sweet for better darkness for light and light for darkness*. Yes the soul must be dreadfully and deeply diseased or we could not account for it that men of good judgement in other things should put so false an estimate on the world that they should pursue it so eagerly when their consciences and the bible tell them that it is missing their souls that they should confess themselves to be without hope and yet live on year after year without anxiety. That they should acknowledge it to be their duty to repent and yet neglect it that they should confess it to be their duty to pray in their families and in their closets and yet do neither. That they should flatter themselves with the hope of worldly happiness when all that have gone before them with one voice declare that they will never obtain it that they should remain careless and unconcerned when they know that they are the enemies of God. All these things prove beyond a doubt that the soul is disordered - that sin reigns and rambles in our very blood and spreads a horrid apathy over the whole moral system. All these things prove that there is but one physician that can cure us - but one fountain that can wash away the poison and open our eyes and our ears.

Sixthly. In a dream men form no proper estimate of time. The events of a week seem to pass before them in a moment and an hour appears to them a year.

How exactly does this characteristic suit the case of the worldly minded man. He keeps up property or strives for fame or provides for future pleasures as if he were certain of thousands of years on earth. His thoughts are incessantly employed and his hands busied in getting ready to live fancying that ere long he shall take possession of the joys he has been pursuing all his days although they have eluded hitherto his grasp. But during all this time he makes no provisions for eternity. Though death reminds him by calling away one and another of his companions and friends that his days are short and uncertain yet he feels a kind of security that he shall not die for many years and he seems utterly unable to form a proper estimate of his coming days. The few moments that are left to him appear like so many centuries and he thinks it unnecessary to prepare for death these many years. Every impenitent man would be in horror if he knew he were to die the next moment or the next hour or next day. The reason then why such are not alarmed is that they have no idea how short their coming days are. (But ere long the dream in which they now repose will be broken by the dreadful reality.)

Seventhly - In a dream a man has no conception of his real condition. He may be asleep on the brink of a dangerous precipice. His habitation around him may be wrapped in flames or the assassin may be standing over him with a naked dagger to plunge into his heart at the very moment when he perhaps his soul is feasting on some delightful vision of peace and happiness. Sisera perhaps was dreaming of security and victory over his enemies at the very moment when the hand of Jael drove a nail through his temples and fastened him to the floor. And Holofernes in his sleep might have been acting over again his reveling and exciting in his triumph over the Jews and over Judith just at the time when her hand was lifting the falchion to sever his head from his body.

Alas! This too is but too exact an emblem of the condition of the worldly minded impenitent man. At the very time in which that careless youth may fancy his prospects to be most bright and the season before

him most enchanting - at the very time when his anticipated pleasures seem just within his grasp that may be the moment when death is aiming an arrow at his heart. When fortune smiles most sweetly upon the man who is in eager pursuit after riches and when his possessions increase beyond his expectations and looking round his heart exclaims – soul thou hast much good laid up for many years take thy ease eat drink and be merry – that may be the hour when the voice of God may be saying, *Thou fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee*. Ah! How many impenitent men have found the hours of this brightest success to be the hours of their deepest woe! They are in truth asleep upon the precipice. They are asleep almost surrounded by the eternal flames of hell. They are asleep while God is pointing the arrow at of his wrath at their souls. They are dreaming of serene skies of gentle breezes and a delightful sun while the storm of almighty wrath is gathering over their heads and the lightning flashes in their faces. They are dreaming of beautiful landscapes when blackness or darkness are just ready to envelop them forever. They are dreaming of pleasant and amiable companions and of social enjoyment while the spirits of darkness are waiting to receive them and the groans and curses of hell will assail them when they awake.

And from that dream my hearers they will soon awake. The man who literally dreams does not long enjoy the illusion. The morning comes and chases away in a moment the fine prospects of the sweet pleasures he was receiving. Instead of the golden scene feasting upon without a fear and without alloy he opens his eyes to all the barrenness and pain and trial of this world. And thus suddenly will the painted visions of the sinner be swept away. How will *he be brought into desolation, as in a moment! How will he be utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so O Lord when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image*. All his schemes - all his hopes will be buried in a common grave and all the airy phantoms of life will be seen no more. Hell will now open on his view with its gloom and its horrors. There will he lift up his eyes being in torments. There will he learn for the first time that the friendship of the world is enmity with God.

Such will be the dreadful close of the dreams of the man who loves the world supremely and neglects his soul to the end of his days. Yet my hearers what reason I have to conclude that the many of us now in this house of God are in this condition. What conclusive evidence do we give that we are pursuing the false visions of worldly happiness to the ruin of our souls. How many of these youth before me are looking forward to the day when they will be rich and honored and happy! And who is so captivated with earthly scenes that they neglect the God who demands and deserves their hearts. But my dear young friends be assured you will be disappointed in your expectations of worldly happiness. You may not believe me now - but forty years hence you will believe me when I say that every succeeding year of your lives you will enjoy less and less of this world and in the same number of years to come you will not enjoy so much of it as you have enjoyed in the years that are past.

You may call me cruel thus to endeavour to dash from your heart the cup of anticipated worldly happiness just as you are about to take it. But my friends those of us who have tasted of it can testify that there is deadly poison in that cup. It will kill the soul. But I have a pure fountain to which I would point you. *Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but he that drinketh of the water that Christ will give him shall never thirst and it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life*. If you seek for happiness on earth you seek for what no man ever found. There is no happiness but in God. It is wretched delusion to seek for it any where else.

And let those who have lived even to middle age and whose dreams of worldly greatness and happiness have not been broken let those be urged to burst away from the murderous delusions. Your dream is almost at an end. You may hug and worship that farm that money that house that equipage that

reputation a little longer. But the bubble will soon burst. Death will break you away from these fond idols and you will be confronted with that God who has said, *thou shalt have no other gods before me - ye cannot serve God and Mammon*. And that meeting depend upon it will put an end to all your earthly dreams. The alternative is now before you the alternative is before you to yield your hearts to God or to be his enemy through all eternity. Choose then before God shall choose for you.

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*[The last page appears to be a later addition or a revised ending.]*

But my young friends, be assured you will be disappointed in your expectations of worldly happiness so long as you seek after it without personal religion. You will not believe me now: but had you forty years more experience you would believe me when I say that in every succeeding year of your life you will enjoy less and less of the world unless you embrace religion. The next ten or twenty years of your life will bring you far less of mere worldly pleasures than the ten or twenty that have just passed.

You may call me savage and unfeeling thus to endeavor to dash from your hands the cup of anticipated happiness just as you are about to drink it. But my friends those of us who have tasted it can testify that without religion to neutralize it there is deadly poison in that cup. It will kill the soul. It will paralyze your capacity for happiness. There is no real happiness but in God's favour. Let that be mingled with the streams of worldly pleasure and they will become sweet and salutary. Every succeeding year of your life you will enjoy more and more of the world and when taken out of it it will be only a transfer to a higher sphere of happiness. While the worldly minded unconverted man is awakened from his dream of anticipated pleasures to feel the storms of the Almighty wrath and to drink the cup of his indignation around you will be the joyful light of heaven when you awake from the sleep of death nor shall you ever go down while you wander on the waters of the river of life and the tree of life yields its golden fruit.

Delivered

At Conway August 1823

At Williamsburg November 1824

At Gill November 1823

At Muddy Brook December 1823

At Greenfield South Parish 1824

At Buckland October 1824

At Amherst East Parish 1825

At Hadley Mills November 1832

At Amherst College April 1828

At Amherst College June 1837

At Amherst West Parish November 1831

At Amherst College July 8 1832

At Portland Mr. Vaill's Parish May 1835

At Northampton April 1838

At Leverett February 1833

At Amherst North Parish May 1838

At Amherst South Parish August 1840

At Pelham August 1840

At Amherst College September 1840

## Sermon 184 Heavenly Rest

[Sermon No. 184, "Heavenly Rest," Hebrews 4:9, 1823 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 1]

Hebrews 4:9

*There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*

When Christ came into this world he found our race tossed and driven furiously on the tempestuous ocean of sin. The waves and winds of passion were urging them boisterously onward and self was the only helm or chart or compass by which they were guided. To allay this stormy ocean to bring to land our tempest tossed and abandoned race was the object the Saviour had in view. (He saw the guilty race of mortals drifting onwards towards the fatal whirlpool of death which yearly swallows up its thousands hurrying them down into the bottomless gulf where they will rest no more forever and ever: and a deep feeling of compassion urged him to attempt their rescue.) He provided an ark of safety and launched it upon the billows in search of those who were struggling and sinking and choking in the muddy waters. He spread the white canvas of peace and mercy and kindly invited all who laboured and were heavy laden to come unto him with the assurance that he would give them rest.

To this kind and urgent invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ some listened and found that his promised rest was not a delusion. Entering the ark of salvation they found rest from the habitual dominion of sin. Sin indeed still remained like as a thorn in their flesh and oftentimes rose with a desperate fury and maintained an obstinate contest for the dominion of the heart. But its habitual mastery was gone and by resorting to Jesus knew that the sinner did not fail of receiving new strength and consolation. Sin can and does prevent the rest of the Christian from being perfect but it cannot destroy it. It does sometimes harass and distress but it cannot drag the soul away from the rock on which it reposes.

The man who has fled to Christ finds rest also from the menacing curse of a broken law. Previously the two edged sword of that law hung over his head suspended by a single hair and although a mist sometimes hid it from his view it still hung there and his danger is no less imminent. But Christ interposed his own body and though that sword might fall it could not reach the sinners head through that invisible defence. Christ had redeemed him from the curse of the law being made a curse for him.

The sinner resorting to Christ obtained rest also from the galling yoke of Satan. Over the whole of the apostate race of Adam this prince of the power of the air this god of our world waves an iron sceptre and imposes on them a tyrannical yoke until Christ break asunder the fast riveted chains. And although it is a bondage whose horrors men are but little sensible of it is nevertheless a most degrading and oppressive one. (There is no rest no peace to the man who is led captive by Satan at his will. He may fancy musick in his chains but it is illusive - it is only the clanking of his fetters. *It is like the trouble sea when it can not rest whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*) But the reign of Satan is at an end when the dead hears the voice of the Son of God and come forth from the grave of sin. Satan bruised under his feet for *this purpose was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.* Now and then indeed is he permitted to assault and distress the believers soul: but he has only to take to him the shield of faith and he will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the adversary.

Once more the believer in Christ finds rest from the bondage of the world. The world is another master who exercises unlimited dominion over the unregenerate soul. He is continually tempted forward in chase of its vanities and trifles and though perpetually disappointed and vexed he still presses on in the eager pursuit hugging the galling fetters and kissing the hand that is crimsoned with the lifeblood of his Lord. This blindness to true condition the Saviour takes away from the sinner's eyes and causes him to see how hard a master he has been serving. He feels himself an emancipated slave freed by an Almighty arm. He rejoices in the easy yoke of his deliverance and though sometimes assaulted anew by his former oppressor he knows that finally he shall be more than conqueror through him that loved him.

Such is the rest the believer in Christ finds in this world - and many of this description experience still more of consolation and support and even peace and joy in believing. But as already observed this rest which even the most advanced Christian obtains here is far from being perfect. He is still in a stormy world and its winds and waves have a power over him at times and his anchor hope some times breaks away in the tempests. But when he has passed over the ocean of this world and enters eternity his peace and joy will receive their full and perfect consummation. This is the rest to which the apostle refers in the text. He had been endeavoring to prove to the Hebrews that the earthly Canaan was not the only rest promised to the faithful but that this typified the heavenly Canaan. For in David's time so many hundred years after the Israelites entered into Canaan God still exhorted men to strive to enter into his rest. And if Joshua and (for so the verse ought to have been translated and not Jesus) *if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*

It is not necessary in this place to spend time in showing who are the people of God. It is enough to say that they are those who are *new creatures in Christ Jesus – old things having passed away and all things having become new* - such as are saved not by works of righteousness which they have done but by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost. Such as were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world God having predestined them into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself according to the good pleasure of his will. All such and no others are the inheritors of that rest God has provided. I proceed to exhibit the character of that rest.

#### 1. The people of God will rest from infirmity pain sickness and death.

These begin their attacks upon us almost as soon as we begin to live. Some for a few years indeed scarcely their influence. But very many begin life with the feeble frame with the pale cheeks and the languid eye and the aching head are soon overtaken with these oppressive infirmities and continue to drag on month after month year after year in a kind of life living death. I appeal to any who are labouring under the pressure of infirmity and pain from week to week and year to year to testify how disheartening and trying it is to struggle against the slow workings of disease gradually undermining the constitution and rendering even the grasshopper a burthen - how tedious to have the light of no day pass over you without witnessing to your oppressive languor - your feverish pulse or aching head - how trying to find every effort to serve God or man become a heavy burden not because the spirit is unwilling but because the flesh is weak. And I appeal to you to for you only know how to realize this subject fully. I appeal to you to say how delightful will be the change to put off these bodies so full of infirmity and pain and which weigh down the soul and be clothed in spiritual and immortal bodies which will never be weary - never infirm never diseased never languid – but but always vigorous and healthful! From a rest so sweet how pleasant will it be to you to look back to the distressing contrast through which you are now passing!



But though the Christian may for a few years possess a strong constitution of body yet is it destined ere long to become the prey of sickness pain and death. It carries within it the seeds of destruction - and however vigorous now the worm is waiting to consume it certain of its prey. For nearly sixty centuries pain sickness and death have been sweeping with *the broom of destruction* over our fallen race. Terrific enemies! Whom none can conquer by whom all must be conquered. Let us fly to the caves and dens of the mountains - it will not avail they will find out and enter our retreat and drag us forth to the slaughter. Who is there that does not shrink from their assault. Whose heart does not sink within him. When he reflects upon their unceremonious and agonizing embrace! Yet this world is theirs - they are the genuine offspring of sin - they follow her steps they feed upon her victims - and we are all her victims.

Under a view so painful - when the heart is oppressed with the melancholy spectacle of a world fallen and falling - groaning and dying under the stern mandates of these almighty conquerors - there is hope there is peace there is strong consolation there is joy in looking forward to a world which they have never entered and whence they cannot follow us! O how rich is that inspired promise concerning heaven that - *God shall there wipe away all tears from our eyes and there shall be no more death neither sorrow no crying neither shall there be any more pain!* We shall not only rest from the actual endurance of pain and dissolution but from the dreadful anticipations of their approach. We shall rest under the immediate protection of the Saviour *who took part of flesh and blood that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death that is the devil and deliver them who through fear of death are all their life time subject to bondage.*

## 2. The people of God will rest from disappointment and afflictions of every kind.

It is affecting to witness the multiplicity and aggravation of the sorrows against which the good man has often to struggle in his passage to heaven. As the waves of the ocean sometimes bury the rocks which they cannot force out of its place so do the floods of affliction frequently roll over the head of the Christian. I see one in spite of every honest effort under the grim dominion of unfeeling poverty - destitute of most of the conveniences of life. I see another against whom the elements seem to be permitted to make war and whose best laid plans prove abortive. I see another mourning over stubborn and ungodly children who are bringing him down with sorrow to the grave. I see another called to witness the death agonies of many a dear friend. Now a brother or sister is torn away - now he stands by the dying bed of a parent now of a partner and now a child suddenly drops into the grave and as one earthly tie after another is burst asunder - as one sorrow after another presses upon it - methinks I see him looking towards heaven and in secret exclaiming *Amen, even so come Lord Jesus come quickly.*

And after such afflictive shocks have been endured for a short time the blow falls at length on the Christian himself - and he exchanges worlds bursting away at once with writhing joy from every care and sorrow and trouble and disappointment and entering the rest that remaineth to the people of God - there he meets all the Christian friends and children who have gone before him: and he now is astonished how he could mourn over their departure. For he now inherits the riches of paradise instead of the poverty of earth - the joys of heaven instead of the sorrows of the world and an unfailing undiminished everlasting flood of glory instead of the bitter floods of affliction and disappointment. O how sweet how enrapturing the change! How delightful the rest! How unspeakable the weight of glory and light afflictions of time have wrought for him in eternity!

## 3. The people of God will in heaven rest from doubts and fears.

Sinful and imperfect as the best Christians are holy and strict as is the law of God - flattering and deceitful as are our hearts it is no wonder that these doubts and fears should often in this world come with a freezing influence over the believer's soul. And there are some Christians who will trust to no evidence of their good state unless it be a miracle. And this they can never have so that they continue through life to be oppressed and distressed with despondency - with the fears of finally losing their souls. But when they actually hear their Saviour saying *come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* they cannot distrust him any longer but will be forced to join the song of blessing and honor to him who has redeemed them to God by his blood and made them kings and priests into his Father. Every doubt and with this every fear will have every Christian the moment he passes the portals of heaven. And how glorious will be the contrast between the distressing fears and doubts of earth and the perfect confidence and serenity of heaven. To the Christian the bare possibility of finally failing of salvation is an overwhelming thought. But he will not rest from such apprehension when he actually finds his soul safe across the dark valley reposing on the bosom of life of its God and Redeemer.

4. The people of God in heaven will rest from all the pain they now feel in view of the ravages of sin.

They are distressed by seeing men so blind to the concerns of eternity. When they read in the bible that man must experience a change of heart to fit them for heaven it is painful it is excruciating to see such immense multitudes giving no manner of evidence while they live or when they die that they are the subject of it. Christians love the character and the law of God: yet are they compelled to see the thousands tens of thousands disregarding and dishonoring that God and that law and living in open defiance of his authority - and rivers of water run down their eyes because men keep not that law. They are compelled to see the cause of religion struggling for existence and the holy and humbling doctrines of the cross rejected and ridiculed by the multitudes while errors which destroy the soul are eagerly embraced and zealously propagated. They see the church of God and the devoted remarks of God few in number and among these not many noble not many wise not many mighty after the flesh. They are often moreover compelled to witness the apostasy of those who publicly avouch the Lord and be their God. They see many around them some who are bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh (a husband or a wife a brother or sister a son or daughter a father or a mother) who are living on in neglect of their souls and whom no prayers or tears can persuade to repent.

Such painful spectacles as these of which the world is full weigh down the spirits of the Christian with a most oppressive grievous oppressive burden and vex his righteous soul from day to day. But when he reaches heaven how altered will be the scene! Every heart there will render to God the full homage and love and service which he demands and the ravages of sin will be seen no more. No child no partner - no brother no sister no father no mother no neighbor will there be seen hanging over the pit of ruin resolved upon destruction - no enemy of God to lift up the standard of revolt and make war in heaven. Every soul will be a brother - every heart an altar devoted to God - and though merely a dear friend of the Christian will be missing there yet God will not suffer this to disturb his bliss and glory.

5. The people of God will in heaven rest from their conflicts with sin in their own bosoms.

That conflict is bitter and desperate and unceasing while they remain on earth. Wounded and fainting in the contest they are often compelled to exclaim *no wretched man, etc.* But they obtain the victory when they cross the valley of death. On the battlements of heaven their Saviour flashing the flag of triumph and into that secure citadel where God dwells sin can never enter. It stands forever inaccessible to all

the assaults of this abhorred enemy and all his rage falls harmless at an infinite distance beneath their feet.

Finally the people of God will rest in heaven from the clogs and fetters of flesh and blood.

The Christian in this life always has to lament that his affections are so languid - his desires so faint services so deficient. He finds the grossness of the flesh clogging and fettering the free range of the mind and freezing the emotions of the heart. His body is disordered by sin saying and the soul is pent up as it is were in a dreamy prison where it must pine in cruel bondage. But when death comes he throws open the prison doors and the captive goes forth into the light and liberty of heaven. There a new and spacious mansion is provided for its reception even a spiritual body that will allow all its powers and affections to operate to their full extent. Pure and holy as will be the services of heaven - ardent as is the affection the character of God demands. The glorified saint will never find himself falling short of a love and devotion as exalted and warm as he can desire. His heart unfettered by flesh and blood will spontaneously put forth into full exercise all its affections and remain unclogged and untied in the everlasting services of that blessed world. O, Christian that will indeed be *fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore!*

Such is the glorious rest that remains for the people of God - a rest from infirmity pain sickness and death - from disappointments and afflictions - from doubts and fears - from conflict with sin - from the pains carried of the ravages of sin produces and from the clogs and fetters of flesh and blood. How full of consolation animation and joy is the delightful prospect before you believers in Christ! Amid the severest trials and the darkest scenes of life how aright this blessed hope to buoy up your spirits and lead you to exclaim *I have known that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!*

*O faint not, heir of heaven – a moment bear  
Thy bonds; nor fear the storms that round thee rise  
Thy Father, thy Almighty Friend, on high,  
Looks down, and sees thee struggling mid the deep;  
And will conduct thee safe from final wreck.  
Soon shall thy spirit from its bondage freed,  
On angels wings, borne joyous o'er the waves,  
Regain those shores of light, whose fruits and streams  
And life and joy; whose morn eternal shines;  
Where love ineffable, immortal reigns. [Source: Unknown]*

But on the *other hand there is no peace saith my God to the wicked.* No - to him who will not submit his heart to the Saviour there is no peace saith my God there is no peace in life no peace in death no peace in hell. Consider this ye that forget God lest he hear you in...other...deliver...

Delivered

At Conway July 1823

At Conway October 1825

At Gill November 1823

At Muddy Brook December 1823

At Greenfield South Parish May 1825

At Amherst College August 1829

At Amherst College December 1837

At Leverett April 1832

At Amherst West Parish September 1 1833

At Amherst East Parish July 1836

At Deerfield 1838

## Sermon 186 Attendance Upon Public Worship

[Sermon No. 186, "Attendance Upon Public Worship," Nehemiah 13:11, 1823 Sep, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 2]

Nehemiah 13:11

*Why is the house of God forsaken?*

The minister of the Gospel cannot but regard the attendance of his people upon the public worship of God on the Sabbath as a matter of great importance. For if he cannot persuade them to come to the solemn assembly it is obvious that there is very little prospect of their conversion and salvation: since God has to link salvation with the preaching of the Gospel that very few instances seen in which ruins men attain it who are in the habit of neglecting public worship. Point me to the man whose feet do not tread the course of the Lord and I will point you to one who seldom reads the Scriptures who does not pray in his family or his closet nor examines his heart nor exhibit any decisive evidence of religion.

But is not the house of God this day filled! Why then is it necessary to bring forward that the subject suggested by the text when there is so general an observance of the command not to forsake the assembly of ourselves together? This general attendance today upon the means of grace is the very reason why I address you on this subject. Of what use is it when the house of God is actually forsaken to go thither and urge men to attend upon the public worship of God? Although this house be filled today yet those of us who are in the habit of visiting it one every sabbath through the year know that we are often compelled to witness the reverse of this picture. We will remember how on account of a little unfavorableness of weather or on many other accounts we are compelled to witness these seats vacant and the gospel seems to be preached almost in vain. We will recollect that in particular seasons of the year the minister of Christ is compelled sabbath after sabbath to hear the echo of his voice returned from naked walls while during the week there do not seem to be obstructions sufficient to prevent men from going from place to place in the prosecution of worldly objects. Remember these things with a painful distinctness you will permit me my hearers in the consideration of the text written by Nehemiah during a declension of religion.

1. To compare the reasons that induce men to forsake the house of God and
2. To present motives for an habitual attendance upon public worship.

First I am to examine the some of the reasons that induce men to forsake the house of God.

In the commencement I would remark that some of these reasons are good ones such as man will not blush to give at the final tribunal in all cases of this kind conscience reproaches not; nor is it a difficult matter to determine what are justifiable excuses for detaining us from the house of God. In all cases where there is a more imperious duty to perform than public worship we are not only excused from attendance upon the public services of religion but we are bound to stay away and attend to that more urgent duty. All cases comprehended under such a rule will not be the object of remarks at this time. But there are many reasons which men assign or which secretly operate to detain them from the

sanctuary that will not bear to be examined by this rule: and such I would present for the solemn consideration of those who are governed by them.

And here let me remind you my hearers that the reasons for detaining us from the house of God ought to be such as will stand by us and not make us blush at the day of judgment. For there must be given an account of them. Let us ask ourselves then whether the following reasons are such as we shall dare to address at the final judgment.

One man eases his conscience by saying that he can serve God as well at home by reading the bible or other religious books as to attend public worship. Let the man who makes such an excuse solemnly ask himself whether he does spend his sabbath at home in the reading of the holy scriptures in meditation and secret prayer. Does he devote the day to religion altogether? Does he converse with his friends or children on the subject?

But even if anyone can say that he does all this yet if Christ has appointed public worship what right has any man to neglect the command and set up his private opinion as of more weight than the authority of the Most High God? What reason has any man suppose that he shall be blessed while thus willfully going counter to the command of God? Experience shows that such are not blessed. Leanness is put into his soul and he neglects and forgets the service of God. It is impossible to serve God acceptably without the influence of the Spirit for without him we cannot even think a good thought. But the man who stays at home when he might attend public worship has no reason to expect divine influence and consequently cannot serve God at all while he remains unnecessarily at home.

Another man says that he does not perceive those who attend church to be any better than those who stay away. But if they do not improve it is their own fault: for God vouchsafes his blessing to attend the preaching of the Gospel. But if a man who attends church be a bad man how much worse might he be were he to neglect it. Compare the general state of two societies in the one of which the inhabitants are diligent attendants upon public worship and in the other God is not worshipped in public and who is there that must not acknowledge that public worship has a powerful influence in civilizing refining and purifying people.

Another man will say that if he attends public worship he shall hear nothing new. Those same things he has heard a hundred times will be separated over and therefore it is useless. But permit me to ask such an one whether he does not suppose the same things will be repeated once in heaven again and again and will not those very subjects which the faithful preacher urges again and again on men in God's sanctuary on earth be the source of ever new delight to the glorified saint? If a man therefore does not wish to hear the great truths of religion repeated over on earth even once a week how intolerable it will be would be for him to dwell in heaven when not a day nor an hour will pass in which the same service will not recur? The Christian loves to contemplate the great truths of religion repeatedly - because he loves them. And ought not the man who keeps away from public worship because he cannot every sabbath be fed with something new ought he not to fear that he does not love these truths and therefore does not love God the author of them and is not this an additional argument for him to go where God usually implants a new heart in men on an arrow of conviction viz. his sanctuary? The same reason which operates to keep him from that place will operate to keep him from that place will operate with a temporal force to keep him out of heaven.

Another man will say that there is something offensive in the preacher either in his sentiments his voice or manner or conduct: and therefore he cannot profit by sitting under his ministrations. But here let me

ask such a person have you ever in your life put up one prayer in your closets for that minister? If you have not how can you expect to be pleased either with his doctrines manner or anything else? If you have not prayed for him is it any wonder that you do not like his doctrines or manner all of which if he is faithful go to urge you upon peril of your soul to be instant in prayer?

But if you reply that you have thus prayed and still experience no comfort in the house of God then you ought to remember that you are at liberty to go where you can be edified. My object in this discourse is not to urge you to attend at this or that particular house of worship but only to be habitual in attending somewhere.

Another will object to attendance upon public worship because he is not and cannot procure suitable apparel. But my hearers the meanest beggar in the streets never appeared to his fellow man in a meaner dress than all our souls appear in the sight of God. The prophet tells us that *our righteousness is as filthy rags* and John tells us that we in ourselves are wretched and poor and miserable and blind and naked. And did men reflect more upon the appearance they make in the light of God it would lessen their anxiety about their appearance before man. Cleanliness and neatness are highly commendable in all those who go up to the house of God to worship and these things are in the power of every man however poor. And when appears thus although his apparel be less elegant yet if it be as good as his circumstances allow there is scarcely an individual in society who will have the meanness to treat him on this account with disrespect. To be detained from worship on account of our apparel is therefore utterly inexcusable and to stay away because our dress is less elegant than that of others is an almost certain evidence that a person has a proud unsubdued and impenitent heart.

These are some of the pretended reasons that detain multitudes from the public worship of God on the Sabbath. But these though the ostensible hindrances are not the real ones in most cases. The want of a disposition is after all the grand obstruction. But this want manifest itself in a variety of ways some of which I shall mention.

One man neglects the sanctuary because he wishes to attend to his worldly business. He has some account books that need posting or he wishes to look over his farms or write letters or do something of a sinister character. Now if he had no other tribunal but the world to which he is accountable he might do this and not feel greatly disturbed. But he is hastening to the bar of God where such conduct will overwhelm him with everlasting confusion.

Another man neglects public worship in order that he may read irreligious books. By irreligious books I mean such as do not treat expressly upon religion and are therefore entirely improper for that day which is made holy to the Lord. A man has so much worldly business on hand that he cannot find time to peruse these works during the week and he concludes to devote his Sabbath day to it. But this is a most wanton provocation of God and the man who does it may depend upon it that bitter repentances await him in this world or the next.

Another person neglects the house of God because she prefers to stroll about the streets and to visit his neighbors. But let him remember that the eye of an omniscient God follows him wherever he strays and that his conduct will one day be exhibited before the assembled universe.

Another man forsakes the house of God because he finds his conscience reproving him too often when he hears the preached word. All that is said condemns him and renders him uneasy and to avoid this infraction he avoids the sound of that voice which decrees to the dividing asunder of his soul and spirit.

Just as if a man who had employed a surgeon to arrest by amputation some mortal disease should shrink from the operation the moment he begins to feel the pains of it and absolutely refuse to submit to it. What can the surgeon do in such a case but leave his patient to die? What can the minister of Christ do in such a case but to leave the sinner to perish!

But to spend no more time in exhibiting the reasons why the house of God is forsaken I proceed secondly to present some motives for individual attendance upon public worship.

And first it is a divine appointment. Waving all other arguments to prove this I will mention but one – *It please God, says Paul, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Now how can men be saved by preaching if they do not come to hear it? The fact that God does save man in this way is then certain proof that God has made preaching one of his appointed institutions. To disregard any one of his institutions is to place ourselves voluntarily out of the reach of mercy. For no man under such circumstances can ask any favour of God with the least probability of a gracious answer.

But secondly public worship is a reasonable duty. Is it not reasonable for rational and accountable beings dependant every moment on the supporting arm of Omnipotence for the continuance of life - on divine mercy for every blessing - and on divine grace for every holy thought and feeling - is it not reasonable for such an one publicly to confess that dependance and endeavour to maintain in the world a sense of the presence and overarching care of God?

And thirdly public worship has been maintained from the beginning of the world by all those who were the friends of God. The sons of Adam came before God at the head of their families while they probably officiated as priests - this being customary in early times. Noah Abraham Joshua and other patriarchs thus worshipped God. But the true mode of worship was revealed to Moses and practiced by the Jews for many ages even to the coming of Christ. Our Saviour frequented houses of worship. His disciples assembled on that first day of the week with one accord in one place. And from their days to this such has been the uniform practice of all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. And in all these ages of the world God has blessed these assemblies in the house by imparting special grace.

Habitual attendance upon the services of the sanctuary is also strongly recommended by its happy effects on a worldly point of view. It promotes a friendly intercourse and excites an interest between different classes of society and this tends to destroy those little jealousies and heart burnings that too often exist between them. Visiting the house of God tends also to excite diligence and a laudable ambition to appear with decency before others and thus the manners are improved and the uncivilized feelings softened down. While on the other hand the man who neglects the sanctuary is usually inattentive to his appearance and uncouth and savage in his behavior.

Attendance upon the public preaching of the Gospel tends also eminently to promote morality. From the pulpit is presented the only motive that is of much force in restraining men from iniquity viz. the judgment seat of Christ as the final tribunal for us all. And if we compare a town or city in which it is customary to visit the house of God with one in which the house is forsaken we shall see at once how powerful is the influence of this practice in restraining the ferocious passions of the human heart. And if those in any particular place who are in this practice be compared with those who neglect it with which class my hearers should you soonest trust your property your reputation or your life and which gives the most powerful support to all that is excellent in society – and which are most likely to be guilty of tavern haunting - gaming – contending with their neighbors and the like.



The grand object however of public service in this sanctuary is to acquire a knowledge of the glorious Gospel of Christ - wherein life and immortality are brought to light. But on this particular I need not enlarge as it is familiar to your minds.

If I have then but one more motive to present at this time to induce you my hearers to an habitual attendance on the Lord's Day in this house of prayer and it is this. Irregular and only occasional attendance may be the ruin of your souls. Be not startled at this assertion until I present you with an illustration.

In the concerns of this life a neglect to improve a single favourable opportunity for securing property or reputation is often attended with irretrievable misery poverty and ruin. Mere indolence in serving upon a particular favourable opening in business or closing a bargain sometimes decides a man's fate as to this world and leave him to wretchedness and want. Why then should it be thought incredible if something similar to this should be God's dealings in regard to eternal things? Experience does show us that such are his dealings. A man is awakened by the special influences of the Spirit: but resist the Spirit and ere long dies without any more anxiety without God and without hope. Another man receives the warnings of a friend but neglects them and is never harried again. Another man listens today to an earnest exhortation from the pulpit to repent and tomorrow he removes to a place where the Gospel is not preached and he never hears another call to repentance. Such cases as these of which thousands might be mentioned show the sovereignty of God in granting men the means of salvation and that the neglect of a single opportunity to listen to the calls of the Gospel may decide a man's eternal fate. The very day in which he neglects attendance upon public worship may be one in which the preacher brings forth the subject of religion in such a shape that it would have convinced this man and been the means of his conversion had he heard it and perhaps that was the only opportunity of the like kind God will ever grant him. It was a wise reply therefore of a poor man when asked why he was so constant at public worship I cannot tell says he when the saving word will be preached. In truth it is in general a single sermon nay more frequently a single sentence of a sermon that decides our everlasting fate - that is decides our minds to embrace religion. And when that sermon will be preached none but God knows. When we are necessarily detained from public worship we have reason to hope it will not be preached: but when unnecessarily detained we have no security that while we are dozing away the sacred hours of the Sabbath in sleep or passing them in some other way we have no security but that the only sermon under heaven that would convince us of our danger may be delivering in the sanctuary.

There is also another mode in which irregular attendance upon public worship may have the same effect. It is not possible for the minister to present but a small part of divine truth in a single sermon. He can only establish a single point. And perhaps a man listens to one sermon which would have convinced him had he been convinced of some preparatory step which the preacher had established in a former Sabbath when this man was absent could thus through this previous neglect he remains unconvinced and loses his soul.

Does anyone say that this is mere presumption and self-conceit to represent a man's salvation as depending upon a single sermon or preacher perhaps of inferior talents and hastily composed containing nothing which any man of common sense did not know before? It would be so indeed my hearers were the whole dependant upon the talents or eloquence of the preacher. But let it be remembered that preaching is a divine appointment. Were there no promise of a special blessing to attend this exercise you might indeed stay away months and years from the sanctuary with impunity even though your minister had the zeal and eloquence of a Paul. But when God has told us that it is *his will by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe* then is it no want of modesty to urge your

attendance upon the means of grace. We urge you to attend not to witness our talents and eloquence but to receive the blessings the divine energy that accompanies the word of God in the sanctuary. Remember therefore that when you unnecessarily stay away from public worship you do not merely lose the discourses there delivered. These considered for the themselves you might lose and be but little the poorer perhaps. But you lose the precious blessings that God has promised shall accompany them and which he has not promised you shall obtain anywhere else.

In conclusion of the subject my hearers I have only to request you when you rise of the morning of the Sabbath and find yourself doubting whether to visit the sanctuary on account of the unfavorableness of the weather or any other obstruction that is not insuperable set such a time just put the enquiry to yourselves how do I know but the sermon is to be preached to today that would be the means of my salvation were I to hear it - and my everlasting destruction if I do not hear it? And should I not encounter cheerfully as much difficulty as is before me and go to the sanctuary could I only have a hope of thereby adding to my property? And shall I shrink when perhaps I shall secure an inheritance incorruptible undefiled and that fadeth not away by my attendance? Were we all to reason in this manner so many of these seats would not so frequently be empty. Were we to reason in this manner so many seats would not be vacant in heaven.

Delivered

At Conway September 1823

## Sermon 188 Duties of Parents

[Sermon No. 188, "Duties of Parents," I John 2:13, 1823 Oct,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 2]

I John 2:13

*I write unto you fathers.*

<<<This may have been delivered by someone else?>>>

By the term fathers in this passage John might have meant only those who had long been Christians and by the phrase *little children* in the preceding verses only those who had just entered upon their christian course and by young men only those who were in the earlier part of that course without any reference to the real age of those persons. But I see no reason for limiting these expressions in such a manner. If taken literally they are certainly applicable and forcible since there were probably among the Jewish Christians of that day believers not only among the parents but also among their children. I shall understand these passages literally at this time and suppose that the text refers to parents both fathers and mothers. And to them I write at this time on the subject of the religious education of their children: not because there is anything in the text or context that leads particularly to this subject but because (the text is a counterpoint to the one chosen in the morning and I feel desirous the subject should be so too. Religious education is a point indeed which in one shape or another is often presented before you from this desk.) But as it is a subject of the most importance - as the hopes of the church rest on the rising generation and as I had almost said the only hope of our children becoming religious is a religious education (it will not be thought strange if on this subject I add line upon line and precept upon precept.)

In the first place then I write unto you fathers to persuade you early to fix upon one and only one supreme definition to which the labours of your children may be supremely directed.

It ought to be the first enquiry with every parent shall I educate my child to God or to the world - for doing service to the cause of the Redeemer or for shining in earthly greatness? If he does not decide before hand at which of these objects he shall aim he will have no fixed system of exertions: and without such a system his insulated efforts will often produce no effect. These efforts to will be inconstant and wavering generally but sometimes he will make the world supreme and religions as the end of his labours and thus will prevent success in either. Yet this it is to be feared is the course most parents adopt. They wish their children to shine in the world and yet not to be destitute of religion and (at one time they will direct their efforts supremely to worldly objects and another to religious ones.) Thus will they give their children enough of religious instruction to prevent them from eminent success in the things of the world; but not enough to carry them to heaven. Thus will both objects be defeated. Whereas have the parents chosen either the world or religion as the supreme object and made this the central point of every exertion this child would have without doubt attained to distinction. The parent and the child would both have pursued their course without turning aside to the right hand or the left and have brought every circumstance to bear upon the particular point. And I trust it is hardly necessary to say that this particular point should be religion. When I say that the parent should make religion the supreme object of all his instructions I do not mean that no instruction of the world and nature should

be given: but I do mean that the great object of these instructions should be to prepare the child for heaven: and that whatever tends to prevent this or does not promote this should not be taught. Let a parent adopt this course and he need not fear for the worldly respectability of his child. God will take care of that so far as it is for the child's good. He may not indeed be distinguished as a bloody warrior or an ambitious demagogue or a rich miser or man of pleasure or for his equipment equipage and fashionable splendor. But he will be respected and perhaps distinguished as a virtuous and a religious man - the only sort of distinction that is of any real and lasting value.

And now parents I would enquire whether you have a fixed object in the education of your children? Have you determined to make all your efforts in their education exert a direct bearing upon their everlasting happiness? Or are you pursuing the course which too many pursue viz. to talk very feelingly about the salvation of your children while at the same time you are secretly more anxious to have them become rich and honorable among men than in heaven and actually do more to prepare them for shining in the honors of this world than in those of eternity? Is not the language of your conduct toward your children *secure this world its honours and pleasures at all events and then gain heaven if you can.*? While you pray for your children and feel anxious that they shall become religious are you not at the same time more faithful in teaching them how to live than how to die and in obtaining situations for them in this life are you not more careful to obtain one that shall conduce to their temporal prosperity than their Spiritual welfare? If so let me caution you in the words of a distinguished writer to watch over your children with a godly jealousy, and not to suffer those for whose eternity you are so deeply responsible to take their random direction through society just where the prospects of business and of worldly advantage may chance to carry them; to caution you to calculate on the possibilities of moral corruption as well as and on the possibilities of lucrative employment; to look well to exposures and acquaintances, and hours of societal entertainment as well as the commonplace object of a situation in the world. And when you talk of a good line for your children just think a little more of that line that leadth to eternity and have a care lest you be the instrument of putting them on such a path of danger that it shall only be by the very rarest miracle of grace that your helpless young can be kept from falling or be renewed again to repentance. (Chalmers)

I write unto you fathers in the second place to induce you in all your religious instructions of your children to bear in mind that they are by nature alienated from God and inclined to all evil.

A neglect of this fact or disbelief of it is the grand defect in most modern systems of education. Some writers have believed that children are by nature virtuous or inclined to virtue and the assumption of this principle has been the foundation. But if the foundation be sand of what consequence how beautiful the edifice since it cannot long stand. If children are not thus naturally virtuous it is obvious that such a system of education will entirely fail of its object. For it presumes upon principles that have no existence and without these is altogether inadequate. The parent is led to attempt a cultivation of virtuous principles when his work ought to be to implant them. He is led to regard the vices of his child as plants grafted upon a virtual stock and fancies that by breaking off these he has subdued them: whereas if children are not naturally virtuous but vicious these vices are rooted in their souls and the axe must be laid at the root. That men are naturally destitute of virtuous principles and dispositions is abundantly evident from the word of God in the history of mankind. We have the following testimony on the subject from a man who had probably had more youth under his instruction than any other man in this country. *That this (a virtuous) character is not found in children will be absolutely certain to every person accustomed to familiar intercourse with them; whose eyes are not blinded either by the prejudice of system or the dotage of parental fondness. No schoolmaster ever found a collection of scholars, every one of whom did not exhibit daily and decisive proofs, that he was naturally destitute of this excellence.*

(Dwight)

Others who have framed systems of education have proceeded on the ground that children have a neutral character and are natural inclined neither to virtue nor to sin resembling a blank sheet of paper on which the parent may write what he will either virtuous or vicious principles and thus form the child's character. But if children are by nature inclined to sin (and that they are so who can doubt that believes the bible or knows his own heart) then to educate them as if they were not inclined to it is to labour in vain and spend our strength for naught. I speak here of religious education. They may indeed on this false assumption of their natural purity be instructed how to conduct in relation to this world so as perhaps to be moral and amiable and honest. But so far as the love of God is concerned so far as a new heart is concerned they will remain no nearer to these things then if they had continued uneducated. It is true that children have no innate ideas - their minds are a mere blank. But it is equally true that they have strong native propensities which are totally destitute of moral excellence - nay more propensities that regularly and uniformly lead them to the commission of sin. This is native depravity and such a being deserves a very different treatment in his instruction concerning religion from one who has propensities to virtue or no propensities either way. Unless we know the wants of any being, how shall we supply them - unless we know his disorders they can never be cured - unless we know his inclinations he cannot resist them. It is of vast importance therefore that the parent in giving religious instruction to his children bear in mind that the heart of the child contains principles of opposition to religion - and that disgust and wearisomeness will arise within him as soon as the subject is urged upon him. If he doesn't remember this he will not adapt his remedies to the disease and the disease will remain and the child will be ruined. It is rare is almost miraculous that the child who is thoroughly educated on the false assumption that he is natively holy or of a neutral character is ever converted to religion. He is taught to substitute mere morality and a few lifeless forms for religion and he usually dies clinging to his own righteousness.

\*I write unto you fathers in the fourth place to persuade you in some instances in your religious education to exercise over your children the restraints of parental authority.

If the propensities of children incline them universally to the commission of sin in their inexperienced years, why should not the parent when persuasion has been exhausted in vain exercise that power God has vested in him and forbid the indulgence of these sins? In more advanced life, the child has grown up to manhood and having acquired some experience, it may be more doubtful whether positive and forcibly prohibitions have a good effect and do not tend rather to urge on than to reform the sinner. But in the incipient stages of education there can be no doubt but the refractory youth must be absolutely forbidden to rush into the vortex of sin - the reins of parental authority must be drawn and his proud spirit curbed within due bounds. When children begin to extend their acquaintance beyond the family circle they will find companions who are indulged more than they are and they will dread singularity and plead with their parents for a little more liberty. And the parent perhaps looks about him and sees this and that professor of religion giving such liberties to their children and he will be induced to relax a little his supposed rigor and leave the child to his desired range. But the parent will soon perceive that he has yielded a point that can never be regained and that he has probably ruined his child. One indulgence succeeds another until the child broken loose from restraint pursues his own course and breaks the hearts of his parents. He is soon found in the drinking party - at the card table - in the ballroom and ends his course in the regions of eternal despair.

\*I write unto you fathers in the third place to exhibit (convince) you of the importance of presenting motives before your children in training them up for heaven.

And in selecting motives let it ever be borne in mind that such hearts as they possess are not to be influenced by any feeble ones to abandon sin and embrace holiness. A mass of resistance is to be wrought upon which nothing but the fire and the hammer of God's word can soften and subdue. It is from that book then that motives are to be drawn to present before your children. Impress upon them frequently that God's eyes are upon them and that they live and move within him. Exhibit before them a bleeding and dying and risen Saviour and strive to slay the enmity of their hearts by the cross. Show them distinctly their danger of eternal torments if they do not live like the children of God: and represent to them the happiness of heaven and the necessity of a change in their hearts in order to prepare them for admission into it. Such motives as these are the only ones that will have much influence on the hearts of children. Those worldly hopes which are often inspired in the hearts of the young as the reward of good actions and the fears of worldly punishment may have some effect in restraining them from other sins but they cannot operate radically to the subdued or corrupt desires and the purification of the heart. The principle of emulation also of which parents and instructors make so much use is to say the least of dangerous tendency and often fosters instead of subduing inner corruptions it may assist in forming the understanding but it is apt to inspire a Spirit in the heart that is contrary to the Gospel. The only emulation the Christian religion permits is to excel in holiness: and that more a man has of this the less will he have of worldly emulations.

I write unto you fathers in the fifth place to impress upon you the necessity of instructing your children by example.

There is no necessary connection between instruction and the character of the instructor. Truth is truth whether delivered by an archangel of light or of darkness: and it ought to recommend itself to our hearts and conscience from whatsoever source it comes. Yet it hardly needs to be said that men almost universally connect these two things together and however correct and able may be a man's exposition of truth yet if his conduct be in opposition to it his instructions are more than neutralized. This is not to be sure a reasonable course - or as a distinguished man has quaintly remarked, *people are influenced more by what a man says if his practice is suitable to it because they are blockheads. (Boswell)*: yet the fact that it is so is enough to teach the parent that he should lead a holy life before his children if he would have his lessons take effect. Their minds are much more powerfully affected by what they see or by what they hear so that he should be circumspect in every part of his conduct or they will suspect his sincerity. There are some duties however from which many parents exempt themselves and still endeavour to lead in general unblameable lives. I shall notice at this time only one and that is family prayer.

Those who neglect this duty are not aware how great is its influence upon themselves upon the order and regularity of the family upon the moral and religious feelings of children and domestics and how excellent a preparative it is for religious instruction. Where it is neglected there will be very little reverence for religion among the members of the family in the hearts of children and others will be totally unfit to receive religious instruction. Indeed where it is neglected a parent will be unfit himself to impart that instruction: and there is not one case out of an hundred where such persons do imparted. An omission of this is indeed a deathblow to family religion. Men may indeed say that they fear they are not Christians or that they cannot find any express command in scripture on the subject or that they are too diffident to undertake it or that their families will ridicule them if they do. But all such excuses are of no sort of weight. They will vanish like empty air at the day of judgment.

I write unto you fathers to remind you that all your efforts to educate your families religiously will have

no permanent effect without earnest prayer for the divine blessings.

It is not necessary in this house to show that the Spirit of God must accompany those efforts or they will be unavailing. Those that believe in the native alienation of the hearts of their children know that no other power can open them to admit the truth. They know that strive as they may and be exemplary as they may - all will fall powerless upon the unrenewed heart unless there accompany it a divine energy. And who does not know that prayer is the great instrument for drawing down this blessing from on high. And can the parent offer his prayers feebly or coldly when the salvation of this child is perhaps depending - and when there is a responsibility weighty as eternity resting upon him? Let the man who cannot pray earnestly for his family abandon all pretensions to an affectionate regard for them. He is as cruel to them as the grave. I care not though he devote thousands of his property to their comfort and become a slave to them - yet if he does not pray for them he is the murderer of their souls.

Finally I write unto your fathers to remind you that your time for the religious education of your children is short.

They may be taken from you ere long and ere long you must be taken from them. You are rapidly forming their characters for eternity. Whether they are religious or irreligious will depend in a great measure upon the example you set before them and the instructions you now give them. God has committed these immortal souls to your care and in his wise providence intimately connected their everlasting welfare with your treatment of them. And every time you pray for them or with them or instruct them you should feel as if it might be your last opportunity and as if that hour were to be decisive of their eternal condition. You may be irreligious yourselves: but where is the man so utterly devoid of natural affection as not to wish to have his children happy in eternity. If you perish then drag not down with you drag not down to destruction your tender offspring. They are thrown helpless and unoffending upon your care in a stretch forth to you the imploring arms of mercy. They have immortal souls which must be forever wretched if you will not listen to their cry. O parent it is the cry of a beloved child bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh - it is a cry uttered in view of eternal flames to which he is hastening without your help. He clings to you as his natural protection. Show that you are not an unnatural one. You may now save him. But soon his cry of help will be smothered and your power to help will be crushed in the cold embrace of death. But O remember that if you are unfaithful his cry will break forth afresh in another world in tenfold agony and drill through your guilty conscience and harrow up your soul forever.

Delivered

At Conway October 1823

At Sunderland April 1843

## Sermon 189 Duties of Children

[Sermon No. 189, "Duties of Children," I John 2:12, 1823 Oct,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 2]

I John 2:12

*I write unto you little children.*

*[This was delivered to the children of the sabbath school and includes severe warnings about sin and hell. Hitchcock reminds the children of the church that half of them will die by age 12.]*

John one of Christ's apostles wrote these words to little children who lived 1700 years ago: but I write them to the little children in this place especially to such as have attended the Sabbath school the past summer. John wrote to the children in his day about religion about their loving God and Christ and one another: and I shall write to you on the same subject. And this is the very thing which you have been learning the past summer - you have studied the bible and this tells us everything we need to know about religion. But before I proceed as I mentioned I will give you a short account of the Apostle John and the children to whom he wrote.

John and his older brother James were fishermen who lived in a town called Bethsaida. But after Christ chose them to be his friends and companions they left fishing and followed him wherever he went and listened to all he said and learnt of him how to pray and how to conduct so as to please God: so that after Christ was crucified with you remember was when he was thirty three years old he became a preacher and went into very many parts of the world to tell the people how Christ died and rose again and how they must love God and repent of their sins. But it was not in those days as it is now in respect to preaching. Now most people are willing and glad to have the gospel preached to them and in almost every town a minister is supported whose sole business it is to preach. But in the days when John lived men hated religion and actually killed very many only because they told them they must love God and Jesus Christ and do no wrong. Very many were thrown into the fire and burned to death - others were torn to pieces by wild beasts because they went about telling people about Jesus Christ. And they endeavored to kill John also: but God would not permit them, and it is said that a cruel tyrant cast him once into a boiling vessel of oil: but he came out without being hurt at all - yet he continued to preach till he was an hundred years old - and when he was so feeble that he could not preach a long sermon he used to say in meeting, *little children love one another*. What excellent advice!

I must now say a word or two about those little children to whom John wrote. Jerusalem was a great city and the Jews lived in it. Now you know the Jews crucified Christ: and God to punish them for such a wicked deed resolved to destroy that city. But he roused all those that loved Christ to escape out of it before he overthrew it: and they hearkened to the warnings and fled in every direction - and went into all parts of the world. Not only did men and women go away but all those little children also who loved Christ went with them: none but good children went however. The wicked ones were left and in a short time some of them were stoned and some killed by cruel men. How kind God was to those the little children who went away! And he will always be kind to children that love him: but bad children he will punish. The little children who thus went away from Jerusalem with their parents and friends were



scattered all over the world: and John knowing that he should never preach to them anymore wrote them a letter in order to persuade them to be good children and continue such so long as they should live. I write you today for this same purpose.

I write to you in the first place to remind you how grateful you should be to your sabbath school instructors.

You little know how much they have done for you. Every sabbath when when it was in their power they have attended to hear you recite and to try to make you understand the bible and persuade you to be good children. Probably not a day during the whole summer has passed which they have not gone alone by themselves and prayed to God for you that you might be good and happy. You have seen how anxious they appear when you recite to them to have you improve and have you love God and Christ and one another. And now can you be so ungrateful as not to feel how kind they have been to you? What do you suppose induced your teachers to do so much for you? It was not because they expected money for it: because they knew they should have none. What could it be then only because they felt anxious you should be happy? This was the reason they have done so much and prayed so much for you and said so much to you upon religion. And will you not try to do as they requested? Do you think they would advise you to do that which would injure you? Why then will you not love God as they have entreated you to do? Why will not you love Christ as they told you to do? Why will you not read the bible as much and pray as much and be as obedient kind and peaceable as they have requested? Ah, little children, if you are not so if you forget all you have learned and do not listen to what they have taught you how sorry you will be for it and how you will weep for it when you come to die enough to break your heart!

I write to you little children to persuade you to avoid bad company and bad examples.

There are some men that are very wicked in every place: and there are some young persons and some children too of your age who will do all they can to persuade you to follow them instead of your sabbath school teachers and the bible. But if you do follow them depend upon it you will make yourselves miserable. There are some who do not Lord's day but who go about the fields on Sunday stealing fruit or who read bad books or go visiting on the sabbath. They will be very glad to have you do as they do. But such people do not love God and God does not love them and he will punish them dreadfully ere long. Keep away from them then or God will punish you also and remember the sabbath day and keep it holy and always try to be punctual at meetings on that day - and to read the bible and other good books and remember that God sees you through the whole day.

There are other bad boys who are always quarreling with their mates and do not obey their parents nor attend to anything that is good. But you had better keep away from such ones and choose those for your playmates who love God and their parents and their bibles and are peaceable and would not hurt anybody for the world. With these you will be very happy: but with the others you will be very wretched.

There are also some boys so very bad that they will even curse and swear. But when you see such an one instead of swearing with him you ought to feel sorry for him for when persons begin to swear when very young there is great danger that they will to the gallows at last. It is a dreadful thing to curse and swear. God is very angry with such persons and it is a wonder why they are not struck dead in a moment. You will sometimes hear persons that are grown up and even some old men taking the name of God in vain and uttering dreadful oaths. But if you enquire you will find such persons never pray to

God and scarcely ever read the bible and people do not love them and they are not considered as gentlemen but are regarded as low bred characters with whom it is a disgrace to associate. Unless you mean to be like them do not follow their example and never utter an oath but remember that God sees you and hears you at all times and is able to strike you dead in a moment.

You will see some persons too who not only curse and swear but make a sport of religion and laugh about ministers and praying people and religious meetings. And now if you wish to be in a great horror when you die and to be cast into the flames of hell you had better go into the company of such persons and join them in making a mock of religion. But if you wish to be happy while you live and when you die and to go to be happy in heaven keep away from such persons and have nothing to do with them unless it be to tell them that they are in great danger. In some parts of the world men have certain kinds of disorders called the plague and the yellow fever and if their friends come near them they are almost sure to catch the complaint and to die. But I should much rather go where the plague and yellow fever are than to belong in the company of men who ridicule religion - and it would be much better for every child to take these disorders and to die with them than to become so wicked as to make a sport of religion.

I write to you little children to warn you against lying.

Children are very apt to fall into this most vile detestable sin before they are aware how bad it is. They do something that is wrong and when they are charged with that they fancy that best way is to deny that they have done it. But they are generally found out in some way or other and then they are discovered to be liars also. Or if they are not found out in the first lie they must tell a great many more to help out the first and thus they get into the habit of lying: when a person lies frequently he will certainly be discovered and men will detest him and put no confidence in him in anything and avoid his society and he will become a companion of thieves and drunkards and all sorts of the worst of men. The only way to avoid all this is never to tell a lie in any instance. If you have done anything wrong and you are charged with it the best way is to confess it and never for a moment to deny it when you know you are guilty. And besides all this you know that lying is a sin which God hates with perfect hatred and has threatened all liars with a dreadful punishment. You recollect no doubt an awful case related in Acts. A man called Ananias and Sapphira his wife told a lie to the apostles about selling their property and God instantly struck them both dead! Other liars however he suffers to live a few years: but he will punish them after they die: for he has said that all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. If any of you then have told a lie or deceived any body and have never confessed it to them and asked their pardon depend on it you are in danger of being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

I write unto you little children to remind you of the importance of obeying your parents and of listening to their instructions.

You have no doubt that you your parents love you. If they had not loved you they never would have done so much to feed and clothe you and to take you to school. Now as they are older than you are can you doubt but that they are better able to determine what is good for you and what is fruitful to you than you are? Did they ever advise you to do anything which is in the end you found was not best for you? When they urge you to love God to love Christ to pray to God to be sorry for your sins and to avoid bad company - to keep holy the sabbath - to attend meetings and to read the bible - why will you not believe their advice to good and follow it? And when they tell you that you will go to hell if you do not follow it why will you not believe it? They never lied to you in anything else why should you think they of

lying to you when they tell you such things? You little know how anxious your parents are to have you become religious and love God and pray to him every day. Often when you are asleep at night they are awake praying to God that he would make you good children. And when they call you around them on the sabbath day to talk to you about God and Christ about heaven and hell - about beings sorry for your sins and about dying and going to judgment how can you doubt but they believe every thing they say and that it is as they say? And when they pray with you every morning and evening dare you let your thoughts be engaged about other things? Remember too how many times you are commanded in the bible to obey and believe your parents. The fifth commandment is *honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord God giveth thee*. And Paul says *children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right*. Solomon too says, *Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness*, and in another place he says, *The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it*.

I write unto you little children to remind you that you have souls that must live forever.

What do you suppose I mean when I tell you that you have souls? I will show you what I mean. You have hands and feet by which you walk about and take hold of objects. You have also eyes and ears and mouth - a head and a body. But none of these things are your soul. These are nothing but the body. You can see and feel all these parts of you: but you can neither see nor feel the soul. Yet you can think about the various things which you see and hear. But neither your hands nor your feet nor any part of your body can think. What is it then that thinks? It is your soul. And although you cannot see it it still exists within your body and when it goes out of the body the body dies: but the soul lives. When a person dies it is only the body that dies: the soul still lives and it will never die. The body is put into the ground and the worms devour it: but the soul goes immediately where God is. And the souls of good children and good people will live with God and good angels and good men thousands and thousands of years. That place is called heaven: and all who go to heaven will never want anything more which they do not have and they will be more happy than the happiest man ever was in this world. But the souls of bad children and bad people will go when they die to a place which the bible calls hell. There the devil that worst of all beings and all bad men live and they are in the greatest torment millions and millions of years. They spend their time in cursing and swearing and in quarreling and hurting one another all in their power. The bible tells us that there will be a worm that will gnaw them and a fire that will burn them through all eternity. Whosoever goes to hell will never come away from it. And yet little children you will certainly go there when you die if you do not love God and Christ and one another.

I write unto you little children to urge you never to neglect to pray to God.

If you do not pray to him there is great danger that you will go into that hell of which I have just told you. For persons that do not pray do not love God nor Christ and all who do not love them must go to hell when they die. Besides if you really love God you will love to fall on your knees in the morning when you first rise and give him thanks for all this goodness and pray that he would forgive you all your sins and have mercy on you for the time to come and on all your friends and everybody else. And when your father or guardian in the morning collects you together and reads the bible and prays with you and for you you ought not and if you love God you will not suffer your thoughts to be running upon other things but you will try to join in the prayer which he makes: and when evening comes and you are about to lie down to rest you will not dare to close your eyes before you have prayed to God to have mercy on your soul - you will not dare to do this if you only realize that you may die before you awake. If you do not thus pray at least twice in the day you will forget God and it may be get into the habit of lying and

swearing and sabbath breaking and every the other vile practice by which you will become a disgrace to society and a misery to yourselves and break the hearts of your parents. It is a shocking thing to forget God and neglect to pray to him. Men who do neglect it when they come to die are in great distress and lament that they did not attend to it while they could. Let children then begin early to pray to God and never neglect it every morning and evening.

Finally I write unto you little children to warn you to remember that you must die.

You have attended some funerals in your lives and you saw a lifeless corpse laid in a coffin which was taken up and carried to the graveyard and then let down into the earth and covered up in the ground. Perhaps it was a child who was one of your playmates. And let me tell you that every one of you must die too. It will not be long before the bell will toll at your funerals and you will be put into the coffin and covered up in the earth. You may suppose that you shall live to grow up to be men and women: but this is very uncertain. More than half the children that are born die before they are twelve years old - and it is not at all unlikely that you may be among the number. But are you prepared to die? If people are not prepared it is a dreadful thing to die - because they must certainly go into hell - into a lake of fire and brimstone. But what is to be prepared. Those children are prepared who love God and the Lord Jesus Christ and read their bibles and obey their parents and mind the sabbath and do not lie nor steal nor quarrel nor swear. But those who do lie and swear and quarrel and break the Sabbath and go in wicked company and do not read the bible nor obey their parents these are unprepared. But they are just as likely to die as the others. Yet how awful it is for them to die! Let the children who now hear me enquire of themselves whether they are prepared to die: and if they are not let them not dare to live another day without making a preparation. If you seek God early he will love you and bless you and make you happy in this world and the next. But if you neglect him in youth he will neglect you when you grow up and leave you to go on hardening in sin until you are ready when you die to sink down with devils and wicked men to weep and wail and gnash your teeth forever.

Delivered

At Conway October 1823

## Sermon 190 No Sacrifice Too Great for Christ

[Sermon No. 190, "No Sacrifice Too Great for Christ," Philippians 3:8, 1823 Sep,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 2]

Philippians 3:8

*I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*

*[This sermon includes many arguments for giving up everything for Christ. Several lines near the end might apply to his own decision to leave the ministry.]*

The apostle makes this declaration in reference to his justification before God. None of his attainments which he possessed for conversion such as his knowledge his talents his privileges as a Jew and his righteousness which was by the law could avail to procure him pardon and peace he formerly thought them sufficient. *He was alive without the laws once but when the commandment came sin revived and he died - the commandment which was ordained to be unto life he found to be unto death.* He therefore utterly abandoned all his knowledge and morality and righteousness and zeal and everything else which he possessed as furnishing any ground of justification. Nay he counted them to be but loss in comparison with Christ's merits and righteousness for whom he *had suffered the loss of all things and counted them but dung that he might win Christ.*

*[Several lines are crossed out.]*

The word in the text translated loss signifies loss incurred in trade and more especially that loss which is sustained at sea in a storm by casting the goods overboard to save the ship and passengers from destruction. In this sense the word is used in Acts more than once in the account of Paul's shipwreck. And this view of the text gives it in additionally interesting meaning. In setting out on the voyage of life Paul had expected to purchase salvation by his ritual observances - his talents his good works and the like with an abundance of which he fancied himself freighted. But when the time of trial came and he was in danger from the storm he threw all these overboard and made room for receiving Christ the only sure pilot and alone able to save to the uttermost all but come to God by him.

I shall enlarge upon this thought in this discourse and attempt to apply it to all Christians hoping in this way to exhibit and by the blessings of God impress the Spirit of the text.

Nearly all men who become Christians set out on the voyage of life laden heavily with those commodities which Paul was indeed finally to regard as loss that he might win Christ. With these for a time they expect they shall purchase heaven and it is not till they see their danger that they find these things not only insufficient but a clog to their salvation and that it is not till they are cast away that Christ can be formed in them the hope of glory. I perceive to enumerate some things which we must consider as loss if we would win Christ and *be found in him not having our own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

In the first place we must account our talents or learning as loss if we would win Christ.

Many men of strong minds and extensive information indulge for a time a secret belief that persons of such amplitude of faculties and dignity of character shall without doubt finally enter heaven though they do not submit to all the self denial and humble faith of the unenlightened man. They feel as if such capacities as they possess did not require to go through the same steps as the great mass of mankind to attain salvation. They are a kind of privileged class and although the precepts and doctrines of Scripture answer well for ignorant minds yet they are unnecessary for such as themselves. These feelings in some shape or other do certainly exist sometimes in the heart of the learned man. But they are the rank product of the pride of science. They spring from learned ignorance. The truth is there is but one way for learned and unlearned to become pious. There is no respect in which men are brought nearer to an equality than in the process of experimental religion. The man most learned before now perceives himself to be most ignorant when first his eyes are turned inward upon his heart. He immediately becomes convinced not only that he needs to follow every precept and believe every doctrine which ignorant men require but he perceives that he stands in peculiar need to adopt them all because his temptations are greater and his heart more proud and obstinate. Soon as such a man does see his heart he at once despairs of salvation by his talents and learning and he stands ready to cast these altogether away from him if he can win Christ. He perceives his need of a Saviour who can be his pilot through the storms that are before him. He abandons therefore all hope from science and flies to his Saviour and in his arms alone does he feel secure.

In the second place we must count human applause appearance to be loss if we would win Christ.

There is in the breast of everyman the most ardent wish to please his fellow man so that they shall bestow their approbation upon him. Hence it becomes a powerful cross to take up to engage in those things which we know the world disapproves and in doing which we are sure we shall incur their displeasure. To have those who are respectable in the view of man turn from us with averted looks to be made the objects of their censure or the ridicule is what poor human nature cannot endure. It demands an exercise of faith of a genuine character to go forward steadily in the path of duty when the world are pointing at us the finger of scorn and it demands still more resolution and holy zeal to spend our lives in those actions that bring upon us not merely the ridicule but the positive enmity of our fellow man. We ought indeed as far as in us lies live practically with all men and it ought to be an object with us to gain that approbation of the world in our conduct. But we ought to obey God rather than man and when the applause of man must be purchased at the expense of the favour of heaven - we must no longer hesitate to count their approbation as loss and resolutely to set our faces as a flint in the path of duty. The Christian is often compelled to go contrary to the wishes of his nearest earthly friends or forfeit the favour of God. *For from henceforth, says Christ, there shall be five in one house divided three against two and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son and the son against the father, mother against daughter and the daughter against the mother, the mother in law against the daughter in law and the daughter in law against her mother in law.* But Christ does not represent this division as a reason why we should conform to the wishes or practices or sentiments of our friends if we believe them contrary to his will. On the contrary he says, *if any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters yea and his own life also he cannot be my disciple.* Thus to make Christ the supreme object of our regard and comparatively to hate our nearest relatives and friends is indeed a heavy cross for corrupt human nature to bear: but the alternative is before us either to bear it or to have no part in *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.* If we still cling to the approbation of the world we cannot retain it without violating our consciences we may rest assured that Christ will forsake us and leave us alone without any pilot to plough our way through the tempestuous ocean of life. And what will become of us my hearers when the storms of affliction disease

and death roar around us and the rocks of error and the quicksands of temptation lie in our course what will then become of us if Christ be not our guide and our pilot? While the sea is calm and the breezes gentle we may indeed sail along without Christ and cheered by the approbation and flattery of our friends we made fancy that our course is laid towards heaven. But in the hour when the tempests assail us we shall find that our friends cannot and that Christ will not help us.

In the third place we must count worldly distinction but loss if we would win Christ.

The scripture makes no compromise with any inordinate desires: but lay the axe to the root of every corrupt tree. Their unsparing language in relation to an ambitious Spirit is *he that exalteth himself shall be abased*. This does not forbid and effort to excel in virtue and holiness - nor an effort to qualify ourselves for eminent stations in society in order that we may be eminently useful. But it forbids through mere selfish motives to follow the phantom of a great name to seek distinguished stations in order to gratify our pride or subserve our own selfish plans. It forbids that which goes by the name of inordinate ambition. It forbids us to sacrifice our religious privileges or professions in order to attain to the uppermost rooms at feasts the chief seats at the synagogue and to obtain greetings in the marketplace and to be called of men Rabbi. All such things indeed must be counted as loss by the Christian. He must cheerfully without a sigh give them up for Christ. Nay if need be he must be content to renounce all prospects of worldly distinction even that which are not in ordinary cases inconsistent with Christian character and be satisfied with the apostles to become as the filth and offscouring of all things. Like Moses he must scorn even the splendors of a court and choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season - esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt or the world.

When we consider that the love of distinction is the strongest of all passions in the human heart it must be a sacrifice of no inconsiderable magnitude thus to renounce this love and pluck out his right eye. But it must be done Christians or the love of Christ can never be supreme in your bosom. Your kingdom is not of this world - let not your affections therefore be upon this world - let not your hopes be here. If you have loaded the vessel in which you are sailing the voyage of life with the love of worldly distinctions so heavily that it drags slowly along and every storm threatens it with ruin - cast away I beseech you cast away this weight and make room for the love of Christ to enter that you may be safe in the trying hours and finally reach the port of heaven in peace.

In the next place if we would win Christ we must count our worldly expectations as loss.

The greater part of men especially the young have certain prominent objects which they pursue with much assiduity. They are looking forward to such or such an acquisition either of property or reputation or pleasure on which they deal with much fondness and it is no easy matter to renounce all these expectations which the imagination renders so enchanting. But if we would attain to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus we must be prepared at all times to resign all these prospects without murmuring and even with cheerfulness. When they become idols and obstruct our progress in religion and cause our love to the Saviour to grow cold as they often do we must not hesitate to abandon them all. Or when the call of duty demands of us to resign these hopes and to follow Christ through self denial and reproach with scarce a place to lay our heads we must not shrink a moment from taking up the cross and bidding an eternal farewell to all our plans of earthly happiness.

In the next place we must count worldly possessions as loss if we would win Christ.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof the gold and silver are his and the cattle on a thousand hills. Indeed what have we which we did not receive from God and for the use of which we are not accountable to God. There is nothing improper in obtaining property by honest industry - there is much that is commendable in it indeed. But the fault lies in not using their property in such a manner as God rules - and in not feeling that all their possessions really belong to God but as if it belonged to ourselves. We are bound to write holiness to the Lord upon our farms our money and our merchandise. We must be ready to dispose of this property in just such a manner as we think will most conduce to the honour of God. Nay we must be prepared if God wills it to abandon it all and submit to poverty of the severest kind for the cause of Christ. When the question before us is whether we shall retain our property and lose Christ or abandon our property and win Christ we must not hesitate to count the former as loss as a thing not worthy to be compared with Christ. To be sailing on the ocean of life with much freight of money is dangerous at best. *For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* But to be unwilling to part with that money when God in his providence demands it to cling to it closer than to the Saviour is to put ourselves in imminent danger of final shipwreck. *For as we brought nothing into the world it is certain we can carry nothing out of it.* No man sinks sooner in the waves than he who clings to a bag of gold.

In the next place if we if we would win Christ we must count worldly pleasures as loss.

We must not mourn if we cannot enjoy many of them - nay if we are called to forebear them all for Christ. We must remember whenever called to forbear from the pleasures of time and sense that our rewards will be *joys which eye hath not seen, etc.* Could the Christian feel this he never would heave one sigh after forbidden indulgence. Could he have a vivid conception of his Saviour living a life of abstemious not having where to lay his head - seen often to weep but never to laugh - and spending whole nights in prayer instead of reveling could he deeply realize all this he would cheerfully resign the pleasures of the world and rejoice to live like his Saviour above the world while he lived in it. And let the Christian professor who pleads for a little indulgence in these things remember that men do not rise from the dozing couch of indulgence into heaven. The table of luxury on earth bears no resemblance to the table of Christ in heaven. Between the slough of sensuality on earth and the abodes of the blessed there is a wall infinitely high and infinitely thick. There is no pilot who can guide to heaven the man who has freighted himself with worldly indulgences. Such a vessel is abandoned by Christ and he only can conduct us to glory.

In the next place we must regard conformity to the world as loss if we would win Christ.

In other words we must refuse conformity to the customs sentiments fashions and habits which we believe to be contrary to the will of God. We must not dread the imputation of singularity and hence be induced to yield where Christ would not have yielded. The Christian by thus coming out from the world may incur reproaches and ridicule: but it is easy to bear these in the final sentence, *depart those cursed into everlasting fire, etc.*

In the next place we must count our own goodness to be loss if we would win Christ.

That is we must not depend upon it at all as a ground of our justification before God. Paul in the context says, *if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.* That is no man could produce more sincerity or zeal in religion or correctness of morality then he. *But,* says he, *what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.* And however correct has been our conduct and sincere our feelings when we come before God we *must confess that we are but unprofitable servants*



that *our goodness cannot esteem unto God, etc.* and that by works of law we cannot be justified: otherwise Christ will not save us. The alternative lies before us to abandon our own works and be served by the righteousness of Christ or cling to our works and shrink with them into hell. Not that morality or good works are of no use: but they are not the ground of our acceptance with God. They are necessary to prove us to have religion, but the merits of Christ are the only ground on which we can be justified.

Again if we would win Christ we must count worldly ease as loss.

If called to endure any hardships and suffer any privations for Christ we must not shrink from it. We must not consult our ease but our prospects of usefulness. We must not enquire whether such or such a pursuit will conduce to long life but whether it will conduce to our living well.

[Asterisk]

There is in scripture an awakening declaration on the subject: *Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it.* This declaration ought to cause the man who makes no sacrifices for Christ to shudder. On the other hand the remainder of the verse [????] to animate the devoted believer, *And whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it, etc.*

Finally if he would win Christ we must count life itself as loss.

If the cause of Christ demand that we sacrifice to it our lives we must cheerfully resign them. We are not called to the stake nor to the bloody amphitheater in these days. But still there are many cases in which we may be as certain we shall sacrifice our lives in the cause of religion by a slower yet not less sure process than the faggot or the combat with the wild beasts. And in such cases to shrink from taking up this appalling cross is to show that we love ourselves better than we love Christ.

[Asterisk]

Such brethren is the self denying Spirit of the Gospel. Yet think not here that the yoke of Christ is hard or his burthen heavy. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is enough to recompense every trial and hardship every thing indeed which we can endure for him. And he too will ever stand by us and strengthen us for the conflict. But if we shrink from taking up the cross daily Christ will abandon us. If we shrink from the cross we give evidence that we have none of the Spirit of Christ. If you are not prepared then my hearers for such sacrifices and self denial as have been pointed out at this time keep far away I beseech you from the holy ground of religion. These are enough already in the Christian church who do not put so much as a finger to the cross. If you cannot endure the thought of giving yourself up unreservedly to Christ – of making great and painful sacrifices in his cause - if you prefer your own interests to his glory remember that none of [????] no advocate in the great day of accounts. Then Christ will disown you and spurn you away from him.

My brethren this is a searching subject. It is full of alarm to the careless lukewarm Christian but full of consolation to the devoted one. Are we living in the daily exercise of self denial and ready to make sacrifices for Christ? Does a knowledge of him appear so excellent that we count all things loss in comparison with it? We are embarked on the voyage of life and we profess to have Christ for our pilot. But are we not still laden with many things which the apostle threw overboard? If so it is high time that we follow his example and cast away everything but Christ. If we prefer anything to him we may depend upon it that he is not our pilot. It may be a calm and pleasant season with us now and we can sail quietly

along without an Almighty Saviour. But the storms are near us. We soon must go through the dark and boisterous passages of death and if we have no Christ for a pilot then we shall inevitably be swallowed up in the devouring whirlpool and sink into inevitable destruction. Let us then be wise in time and shrinking not from the cross of Christ while we live that Christ may not forsake us in that dreadful hour.

*And must I part with all I have,  
My dearest Lord for thee?  
It's but right since thou hast done  
Much more than this for me. [Source: Hymn by Benjamin Beddome, 1799]*

*Let us not lose the living God  
For one short dream of joy,  
With fond embrace cling to a clod  
And fling all heaven away.  
Vain world thy weak attempts forbear,  
We all thy charms defy,  
And rate our precious souls too dear  
For all thy wealth to buy. [Source: Hymn by Isaac Watts, 1827]*

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*[The following list appears on the right side of the last page; it was written with the paper rotated. Some of the items are crossed out suggesting Hitchcock may have used it as an outline or check list as he reviewed the sermon.]*

Great talents and knowledge  
Human applause  
Worldly distinction  
Worldly friendships  
Worldly conformity  
Worldly morality  
Worldly ease  
Worldly possessions  
Worldly prospects  
Worldly pleasures  
Life itself

Delivered

At Conway September 1823  
At Greenfield January 1824  
At Montague April 1824  
At Newton June 1825  
At Amherst College July 1831  
At Amherst West Parish February 1835  
At Deerfield July 1836  
At Northampton February 8 1837

## Sermon 191 Indecision in Religion

[Sermon No. 191, "Indecision in Religion," Joshua 24:15, 1823 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 3]

Joshua 24:15

*Choose you this day whom ye will serve.*

These may be regarded as a part of the dying words of Joshua an eminent servant of God. Finding himself to be going the way of all the earth he assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem with a view to persuade them to review their covenant with God. He then repudiated what God had done for them as a powerful motive to urge them to obedience. Yet they were free agents and if it seemed evil unto them to serve the Lord he urged them to choose that day whom they would serve. Many of the Israelites were already spiritual worshipers - and many more attended to the outlawed forms of religion. But through carelessness and worldly mindedness they neglected to take a decided stand on the Lord's side. Joshua urged them as his dying counsel no longer to rest in anything short of a resolute and decided preference of the service of God. *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Whatever others might resolve he determined that he would stand forth resolutely and perseveringly as a servant of God.

The text then contains an earnest exhortation of a dying man to decision in religion. I would take up this exhortation today and urge it upon this assembly. For in every age - in this age in this place in this house in many of our hearts may be seen that same indecision which drew forth the feeling exhortation of the venerable Joshua. And while I exhibit the nature and the evils of indecision in religion may I not hope to gain at least the sober attention of this audience.

It will hardly be necessary in this audience to attempt the definition of indecision in religion. We all know what it is to be undecided in regard to worldly concerns. When we are at a balance in our minds about the course to pursue or what particular party to join - when we adopt no measures for advancing the interest of one side or the other then do we exhibit an indecision in respect to these objects. And when we manifest the same neutral feelings and follow the same neutral course in regard to religion - when we do not perform the duties it solemnly enjoins - in relation to ourselves our God or our fellow men - when we do not take a decided and a public and a firm stand on the Lord's side nor in opposition to his cause what is this but indecision? And I would fain convince the very many who are living in this state that it is criminal and destructive.

In the first place indecision in religion manifests a criminal disbelief in the declarations of God.

I speak here of the belief of the heart of that deep and thorough conviction of the truth which is operative - which does not evaporate in words but prompts to immediate and resolute action. Now we do not suppose in worldly matters that a man has anything of this hearty belief unless his practice in some good measure corresponds to his profession. A member for instance tells you that he believes he

shall starve unless he make use of the appointed means for obtaining a livelihood: but if you see him regardless of these means altogether, and spending his time in idleness, have you not reason for saying that he does not really and heartily believe in the necessity of exertion? You must draw this conclusion or suppose the man deranged. And when we meet with one who professes a belief in the bible - who says he acknowledges it to be necessary for him to repent and be converted in order to his entering heaven and if he does not enter heaven he shall be endlessly miserable in hell; and yet he entirely neglects repentance year after year and manifests no peculiar anxiety on the subject, what ought we to conclude? Is it not certain that he has no realizing hearty belief of these great truths? The fact is there is a secret scepticism lying at the bottom of his heart. His understanding is convinced but his heart remains unbelieving. His understanding cannot resist the flood of light that pours in upon it: but his heart resists it. And of what use is such a belief Nay, what an insult it is to Jehovah thus to resist the power of the most momentous truths promulgated in the most solemn manner! It is nothing less than to make God a liar. The man acknowledges the necessity of repentance because he cannot resist the evidence of it in the bible. But the same time his heart tells him that he shall somehow enter heaven without it. Now if this be not desperate presumption - if this be not criminal unbelief - what is it?

In the second place indecision and religion in many instances manifests a cowardly spirit unworthy an immortal being.

It is certain that many who secretly believe and in some measure realize the truth of religion shrink from an open avowal of that belief - because they dread the cross which they must take up. They are afraid to meet the approaches of such a friend or such a companion. They know that by boldly avowing themselves on the Lord's side they shall impose upon themselves some peculiar duties. Now they can be conformed to the world in a good degree and indulge in its vanities and pleasures and so long as they are decent the world will approve their conduct and Christians will not openly censure them. But let them take a stand on the Lord's side and they know that their worldly mindedness must be given up for heavenly mindedness their indulgence for self denial the friendship of the world for its enmity and their looseness of sentiment and conduct for watchfulness and prayer. And from such a cross they shrink. They dare not meet the frowns of the world. They are ashamed to suffer the reproach of Christ and had rather enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. But this cowardly shrinking from the cross my hearers is to sacrifice the soul. It is to prefer the praise of men to the praise of God. It is a cowardice unworthy the dignity of the immortal soul. It is a vile dastardly crouching to the opinion of the world. Be ashamed immortal beings thus to shrink from defending the noblest cause in the universe! Be ashamed to forsake the standard of your conquering Saviour. Be ashamed thus to crouch and beg for mercy from an ungodly world where your Captain would fain lead you forth to conquest and a crown.

Thirdly indecision in religion manifests a great and a criminal weakness of character.

In the important concerns of this world - in all those plans whose object is the promotion of good order and civilization and learning the most charitable construction we can put upon the conduct of the man who neglects doing anything in their behalf is that he is weakminded. And when men take no decided part in the unspeakably important affair of religion when they remain halting between opinions does it not indicate a criminal weakness and an undecided vacillating state of mind which turns every way but the right way? How blunted must be that man's faculties who does not perceive the works of religion to be momentous beyond all others? And how weak his character who when he perceives this does not make a choice and embrace religion? And that weakness is criminal because God has given us all powers of mine sufficiently capacious to see the evidence and importance of religion: and if we neglect it it must be because the vigor of our characters is crippled by worldly attachments or indulgences. Be ashamed

then my fellow mortals, ye who boast of superior reason and discernment and providence be ashamed to be chargeable with a weakness and halting in religion which you would blush to be guilty of in the affairs of this world.

Fourthly indecision in religion manifests in many instances a gross perversion of taste.

The grand reason why many halt between two opinions in regard to the concerns of their souls is that they love the world too well to resign it for God - that is they prefer the things that are unsatisfying debasing changeable and temporal to those that are pure and holy unchangeable and eternal. They prefer the riches of this world to the riches of paradise - the low groveling objects of time and sense to the immortal pleasures of religion - the husks of this world to the bread of life and the water of life - the farm the money and the merchandise to the inheritance incorruptible undefiled and that fadeth not away - the friendship of wicked men and devils to the friendship of God and holy angels - the pleasures that are groveling and transitory to the *joys eye hath not seen nor ear heard, etc.*

And is not this a striking proof of a taste shockingly perverted? Is it not putting bitter for sweet and light for darkness? Those who are hesitating about their religious sentiments and conduct through an inordinate love of the world may think this is a coarse and unjust representation of their condition. But we do most firmly believe that such is the view angels take of their conduct. The truth is the love of the riches honors or pleasures of the earth stupefies and blinds the heart of men so that they are ignorant of their true characters. *In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them.* Under the influence of this blindness the worldly minded man relishes impunity instead of purity and chooses darkness rather than light. Indeed how can that man's castle be any other than perverse and spoiled who has no relish for the character of God or any holy being.

In the fifth place indecision in religion manifests in many instances a more wanton contempt of the authority of God than open opposition.

Suppose there is a difficulty and contest between you and your neighbour and you should go to him and propose certain conditions for settling it. Now which would be most offensive to you to have your neighbour take no notice of your offers not even so much as to give you an answer or to have him manifest into decided opposition to them? You would indeed regard his open refusal of them as proof of his determined enmity but if he took no notice of them it would convey the impression to your mind that he had a sovereign contempt for you and did not regard you as worthy of the least notice whereas his open resistance and deep excitement would show at least that you were too respectable in his eyes to be despised. And why then is it not proof of greater contempt toward God to pay no attention to his overtures of pardon than to be excited by them to open opposition. God has made these overtures in the most sincere earnest and solemn manner and pressed every one of us to come to a decision - to answer him whether we will submit to them or not - and this decision he demands immediately - *Choose you this day whom ye will serve - now is the accepted time, etc.* What then if we remain undecided year after year and appear entirely unconcerned on the subject! Does it not look like a sovereign contempt of the authority of God? Is it not saying to God we know better than you how long we ought to be allowed to make up our minds. It is unreasonable to press us to an immediate reply? We should not dare my hearers to treat an earthly monarch in this manner: we should blush to treat a man who is our equal in this manner: yet we can treat the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in this manner and remain unalarmed.

In the sixth place indecision in religion does in the view of God indicate an enmity to him as real and often deeper than open opposition.

*He that is not with us, says Christ, is against us and he that gathereth not with us scattereth.* The truth is there is no such thing as being really neutral on a subject of such vast consequence as religion. We may appear so to the world but we do not appear so in the eyes of God: for *He looks on the heart.* It must be enmity which will suffer a man to resist so much love and light as the Gospel brings - indifference is enmity in this case and as we just seen it is sometimes the most desperate and bitter kind of enmity. It is that sort of enmity - or rather that climax of enmity which regards the things of religion with a supercilious contempt. Now my hearers we all know that secret enmity is much worse than open opposition. Who of you would not prefer to have a man who hates you boldly declare it? Who of you does not view the sly dark underhanded states of the hypocrites as much more criminal than the cuts and thrusts of your enemy who stands forth in broad daylight? How much more dangerous and vile is the midnight assassin than the noonday robber? Need we wonder then that Christ said to the Laodiceans, *I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

Finally indecision in religion often proves a greater obstruction to the cause of Christ in the world than open opposition.

I trust I shall not be understood by my hearers as endeavouring to prove that in all cases and in all respects men who take no decided ground on the subject of religion are more guilty than open opposers. Particular circumstances will so vary the aspect of different cases that it is not perhaps possible to state any universal rule on the subject nor to make a general estimate of the comparative guilt of the two classes. I mean only to point out some respects and some cases in which indecision is worse for the man - and worse for religion and worse in the sight of God than avowed hostility. And asked before remarked who of us does not know that a secret enemy is more dangerous than an open one? When a man declares himself to be an infidel we know him to be an enemy and can guard ourselves against his attacks. But when a man is professedly a Christian and practically a deist men are not on their guard against him. They can be pointed to the avowed unbeliever and cautioned against the poison of his sentiment; but they will look with comparative complacency upon the man who stands neuter between the Christian the deist and the whole weight of his influence be it more or less will operate to lead others to take the same ground. And thus does the neutral man stand in the way of progress of religion. He checks it more effectually than he could do were an avowed enemy because men do not know what is in his heart. The avowed infidel does not conceal the blackness of his heart and suffers it to foam out its own shame. But we look at the neutral man's heart as a white sepulchre without once suspecting the dead men's bones and the corruption that lie concealed within.

My hearers this whole discourse has been nothing but a series of motives exhorting us to *choose this day whom we will serve* - whether God or the world. To present any additional exhortations in the conclusion will only weaken the force of those already before you. But another difficulty is in the way. We are not apt to suppose ourselves undecided in regard to religious even if we are so. Permit me then to offer a few remarks calculated to discover to us our true condition.

And first let me enquire are we as decided and zealous in regard to religious things as we are in regard to the worldly things. There are some who in every worldly concern have a fixed and decided opinion, and act with vigor and zeal: but in religion remain halting between two opinions and take no active part in defence of the truth. Yet such often have no apprehension that all this furnishes any proof of their

inconsistency and indecision in religion. But it is an evidence that is conclusive to prove a man to be indifferent to the most important of all concerns. For why is it that there should be such an inconsistency in a man's conduct respecting the world and religion except that he loved the former and does not love the latter? All men acknowledge religion to be vastly more important than the world. What is it then but an impenitent heart that prevents any from standing forth as decidedly and zealously on the side of Christ as they do in the things of time and sense? Yet it is nothing uncommon to see men who in everything of a worldly nature are distinguished for their zeal and decision of character who profess not yet to have formed their opinions concerning religion. Just as if it required greater discernment to decide whether religion be true than to determine which part is correct in the thousand disputes occurring in society. Just as if it were possible for such a man to live year after year without any settled opinion concerning religion. The truth is he has an opinion concerning it - he does not believe it. His heart rejects it - whatever may be the convictions of his understanding.

These remarks lead us to the bottom of a certain delusion that prevails among persons of this character. If you try to persuade them to come to the resolution that they will obtain religion or perish in the effort they reply that they are wholly dependant on God and and they have such wicked deceitful hearts that they dare not make any resolves. Wonderful humility! And yet they are not afraid to resolve that they will obtain riches or honors or pleasures. They are not so much afraid that God will not bless their labours but that they can engage with unwearied diligence in worldly pursuits - although they are just as much dependant upon the blessings of God in the one case as in the other.

Secondly. In view of the subject at this time discussed let us enquire of ourselves what would become of the cause of religion in the world if others were to do no more for it then we do?

It must be acknowledged by every unprejudiced mind that one man is bound by the law of God to do no more for religion than another except ..... in abilities and opportunities may impose more..... than another. In other words every man is bound to do as much as it is in his power to promote the kingdom of Christ. God has not fit to make the existence and prosperity of religion on earth to depend upon the efforts of its friends (as the instruments): and it becomes an interesting and solemn question to each one of us whether if others were to do no more than we do for the maintenance and extension of Christianity on earth it would not be driven from the world? What would become of the ordinances of religion if others were to do no more than we do to maintain them? What would become of the visible church if others were to neglect it as much as we do? What would become of the prayer meetings and the conference if others neglected them as we do? Where would there be seen examples of devoted piety if others lived no better than ourselves? What would become of religious conversation if others were as dumb on the subject as ourselves? When would the gospel be preached to the destitute in our own and in other lands if others made no greater effort in their behalf than we do? In fine if all others followed our example would not religion soon cease to exist? If so why are we not living in a criminal neglect of known duties? Why is my neighbor bound to do more for religion than I am when his means and talents are no greater?

(My hearers) such questions as these it would seem must show us whether we are halting between two opinions or not – whether we....or not in the cause of truth. They are short remarks by which to detect the deficiencies of our conduct. I urge them therefore my endeared hearers upon your attention.

But if the searching questions do not after all lead the careless and secure to see their deficiency then thirdly I have one more question to propose. Erelong we must die and be laid in the grave; and then Christians who have been acquainted with us will form some opinion concerning our religious

characters. And what have we reason to conclude the opinion will be? Will they say this man is going to rest in the bosom of his God - this was a decided and zealous friend of religion and gave conclusive evidence in his life that his heart was devoted to it? Or will they say we cannot remember any evidence of religion he ever gave in his life. Or will they say he never took any decided part in religion either in favor of it or against it and we know not what opinion to form concerning the state of his soul? Whichever of the characters they assign to us there will be a good degree of probability that it is the one that belongs to us. For Christians at such a time are disposed to look impartially at the neglect. Most prejudices are destroyed by death and we are willing to judge as personally of a man as is possible. And were we to die my hearers what opinion think you would generally be formed concerning us? Would Christians without hesitation declare their firm belief that we had gone to rest? They would not form such an opinion if is strong presumptive evidence that we had yet taken no decided part in religion. And it is thought that ought to fall on our consciences like a peal of thunder awakening us to choose this day whom we will serve.

Delivered

At Conway August 1823

At Newton June 1825

At Amherst West Parish June 1826

At Amherst College October 1831

At Hatfield March 1835



## Sermon 192 Destruction of Jerusalem

[Sermon No. 192, "Destruction of Jerusalem," Matthew 24:34-35, 1823 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 3]

Matthew 24:34-35

*Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.  
Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.*

The fulfillment of prophecy is the only evidence that is satisfactory that the prophet was sent of God. This is the rule prophets themselves have given to judge of the truth of their predictions. *The prophet which prophesieth of peace*, says Jeremiah, *when the word of the prophet shall come to pass then shall the prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him*. Scepticism itself could not demand a fairer ruler by which to determine the divine commission of a professed prophet: and yet this is just the standard by which we wish the prophecies of the bible to be tried; and we fear not the result.

To text is part of the prophecy uttered by Christ concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. That such a personage as Christ existed in the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar is allowed even by infidels themselves for the proof of the fact is as strong as that of the existence of Augustus Caesar, being witnessed by the same heathen and Jewish writers. It is also an unquestionable fact that about 70 years after the birth of Christ the city of Jerusalem was destroyed with a dreadful slaughter. Another fact related on the authority of four unimpeached witnesses viz. the four evangelists is that Jesus Christ more than 40 years before it took place uttered some prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the events that preceded it. My object then at this time is to compare these prophecies of Christ with the events.

And there is one circumstance that is favourable to the cause of truth in this examination. The principal historian who gives an account of the ruin of Jerusalem was a Jew and a most decided enemy to Jesus Christ. If therefore the facts he relates accord with the prophecy of Christ no suspicion can be raised that he was he accommodated his history to that prophecy.

The prophecies of Christ concerning the subject were numerous and are scattered through the four evangelists. They cannot all be repeated at this time. I shall therefore select the prominent parts of them and give a history of their fulfillment.

Christ was crucified according to the common computation when 33 years old and Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 by Titus the Roman General and son of Vespasian Emperor of Rome. Between the crucifixion of Christ and that event there was therefore a space of nearly 40 years. Hence it will be very natural in examining the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy concerning Jerusalem and Judea to examine first that part which precedes the siege of the city and secondly the period of its destruction.

I am first to enquire into the fulfillment of those prophecies that relate to the period immediately preceding the siege of Jerusalem.

Judea had been under the Roman government nearly half a century when Christ was born. Yet the inhabitants bore the yoke with impatience and often made resistance to their conquerors. And they had become so corrupt that internal quarrels prevailed among them so as to produce the spilling of much blood. At the same time they were looking out and anxiously expecting the coming of the Messiah who they supposed would deliver them from the power of the Romans. False Christs and false prophets accordingly were numerous agreeable to the predictions of our Lord. *Many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ: and will deceive many. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

Agreeably to this prediction about a year after the crucifixion of Christ Simon Magus appeared *giving out that he was some great one to whom all gave heed from the least to the greatest saying this man is the great power of God.* At the same time Dositheus whose disciple Simon was appeared and professed himself the Messiah. About four years after the crucifixion arose another Samaritan imposter who by great promises collected a body of the Jews around him who were defeated by Pilate. You recollect that about 12 years after the death of Christ Paul and Barnabas found in Paphos the sorcerer and false prophet Bar-Jesus full of all subtlety and mischief. In the same year a great multitude were persuaded to follow Theudas another false prophet who deceived many. Twenty three years after Christ's death Judea was again filled with robbers who deceived many and persuaded multitudes to follow them into the desert with the expectation of seeing their miracles. But instead of miracles they were attacked by the troops of Felix who put many to death.

Paul in his second epistle to the Corinthians written about 25 years after Christ mentions false prophets among them who were deceitful transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

28 years after Christ's death Porcius Festus succeeded Felix in the government of Judea and one of his first acts was to send soldiers for the destruction of a party who had followed a certain deceiver into the desert.

Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> epistle to Timothy written 28 years after Christ's death mentions those teachers whose words *eat like a canker* of whom was Hymenaeus and Philetus.

The first epistle of John was written not improbably a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem and in it he speaks of many antichrists and false prophets who had gone out into the world.

False prophets and false Christs also appeared during the siege of Jerusalem agreeably to Christ's predictions: but concerning these it is unnecessary now to be particular.

Another class of circumstances foretold by our Lord as preceding the destruction of Jerusalem consisted of *wars and rumors of wars and commotions: the rising of the nation against nation and of kingdom against kingdom, great earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and tumults in divers places and fearful sights from heaven.* Let us see if these were true predictions.

About three years after the death of Christ, Herod Tetrarch of Galilee made war upon Aretas of Arabia Petraea. This was a rising of of kingdom against kingdom.

About six years after the death of Christ so strong a rumor of war with the Romans prevailed that the Jews left their lands uncultivated.

Near the same time a pestilence raged in Babylon and the Jews who had resided then fled to Seleucia which occasioned a dreadful commotion the Greeks and Syrians having combined against the Jews and slew about 50,000 of them.

Upon the death of the Roman Emperor Caligula an insurrection took place among the Jews in Alexandria which it was necessary to use force in repressing.

As to the famines mentioned in our Saviour's prophecy we learn from history that they happened some of them being very severe in the tenth, twelfth, and thirteenth years after his death.

In the 11th year after his death a quarrel broke out between the inhabitants of Perea and Philadelphia. This was a rising of nation against nation.

During the government of Cumanus a revolt happened among the Jews and the country was filled with robbers and mutual plunderings and ambushes and even battles occurred between the different parties.

About the twentieth year after the death of Christ so great an earthquake happened in Apamea a Syrian city that the tribute due from it to the Roman Emperor was remitted for five years.

Earthquakes, tempests, thunderings and lightnings happened also in various parts of Asia and Italy. *One night, says the historian, there broke out a most dreadful tempest and violent strong winds with the most vehement showers and continued lightnings horrid thunderings and prodigious bellowsings of the earth: so that it was manifest the constitution of the universe was confounded for the destruction of men.*

From this time to the period when the last attack was made upon Jerusalem by the Romans the whole of Judea exhibited nothing but a distressing scene of robbery assassinations murders - contests between city and city - insurrection against the Romans and every other misery which private and social war brings in its train. Tens of thousands of men were yearly destroyed and the hand of every one seem to be turned against every man and every man's hand against him. In the year 66 about four years before the destruction of Jerusalem the Roman armies entered Judea and began there four years work of horrid carnage. Wherever they went the Jews seemed to be excited to the most desperate resistance and men women and children were butchered indiscriminately by thousands. To detail these scenes would be only to repeat over similar acts of horror and carnage.

*[Asterisk]*

We now come to the time of the last siege of Jerusalem: and how precise was the the accomplishment of the prophecies of our Saviour concerning the period immediately preceding that event. And how providential that these facts should have been recorded by one who despised and disbelieved the divine mission! Of the Saviour!

Christ gave a signal to his disciples who might be in Jerusalem at the time of the attack of the Romans upon it whereby they might know when to escape out of it. When you see *the abomination of desolations spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing where it ought not and Jerusalem surrounded by armies then let those in Judaea flee to the mountains and those who are in the midst of Jerusalem depart and let not those who are in the countries enter into her.* And at length Titus appeared before that city

and formed three camps within sight of it. And this was the abomination of desolations to which Christ referred for upon the Roman standards were painted the images of their emperors and gods which always were extremely offensive to the Jews. The Christians in Jerusalem therefore seeing this signal and the city surrounded by armies perceived the exact fulfillment of the instructions of their Master and prepared to escape for their lives. For a time however it was certain death to leave the city. But the providence of God always makes a way of escape to those who trust in his promises. One of the legions of the Roman army was repulsed and Titus remitted for a time his attacks and thus gave an opportunity for the Christians to flee to the mountains: and so obedient were they to the warnings of the Lord that it is said among all the multitudes that perished in the siege there was not one Christian.

At the time the Romans made an attack upon Jerusalem the inhabitants were divided into two principal factions with fierce and bloody leaders: and the streets of Jerusalem daily swam with blood shed in the contests between them. Even the temple became a field of carnage. But when the Romans approached the walls these parties forgot their private animosities and leagued together against a common enemy. But no sooner did the Romans remit for a few days their assaults than the works of slaughter and pillage commenced in the streets of the city. A blind and desperate phrenzy seems to have urged on the Jews in all their conduct. They were accomplishing in an awful manner the decrees of God.

Christ predicted that the enemies of Jerusalem, *would cast a trench about her and compass her round and sweep her in on every side*. Nothing would have appeared more improbable than this: yet Titus actually effected it notwithstanding the great difficulty of the attempt – and in those days a line of circumvallation five miles in circuit shut in the city on every side.

And now the horrors of the siege commenced. About twenty days after the investment of the city famine began to spread itself with all its attendant horrors among the Jews. Provisions whenever obtained were concealed and the rage of hunger urged on the inhabitants to the most desperate acts of cruelty plunder and robbery. The houses were everywhere broken open in search of food and if this was concealed the owners were punished. If they had none in their possession they would be tortured for denying it. The wife tore food from the mouth of her husband and the husband from the mouth of the wife - mother from her children and even from her expiring infant. All natural affection was lost and self-preservation was the desire that swayed every bosom and steeled every heart.

In the history of this famine there is one incident related which is full of horror. An eminent Jewess who had been repeatedly robbed of sustenance but whose life the robbers refused to take came at length to a desperate resolution. Seizing her infant son from her breast she exclaimed, *come be food to me - a fury to the factions and a tale to the world which will crown the sufferings of my country*. Thus saying she slew her child prepared him for food devoured a part and concealed the rest. When the plunderers returned in search of food she presented them with the remnant of her child and congealed them with horror at the site.

Almost incredible as this account appears it is nevertheless a literal and exact fulfillment of the prophecy contained in the second chapter Deuteronomy. *The tender and delicate woman among you which would not adventure to set her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom and toward her son and toward her daughter. And toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates*. This prophecy was uttered more than 1500 years before the event.

While such horrid scenes were acting over in Jerusalem the Romans urged on with alacrity the siege and brought their last engines to bear upon the city. Previous to this time the Jews had cast over the walls the bodies of 600,000 victims of the sword or of famine - and this was doubtless far short of the real number. At length after many a bloody assault the Romans entered the city and spread fire and carnage along the streets. Titus had given express orders to his army to spare the temple: but a soldier seized as he said with a divine impulse hurled a torch into one of its windows and decided its fate. Vain were all efforts to extinguish the flames: for Christ had long ago decided that *not one stone of it should be left upon another that should not be thrown down and heaven and earth might pass away but his word could not pass away*. This prediction was indeed literally fulfilled. For the ground where it stood was ploughed up and sowed with salt: and other parts of the city shared the same fate so as to obliterate all traces of it ever having been inhabited.

Such was the dreadful termination of the Jewish state. In that siege there perished not less than 1,100,000. Ninety seven thousand were taken prisoners: and in other parts of Judea not less than 237,000 were destroyed of which an account was preserved with thousands that could not be corrupted: making in the whole not less than 1,330,000 slain in this war. Surely as Christ predicted those were days of vengeance and great tribulation *such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be*.

*Oh! long foretold, though slow accomplished fate,  
Her house is left unto her desolate;  
Proud Caesars' ploughshare o'er her ruins driven,  
Fulfills at length the tardy doom of Heaven;  
The wrathful vial's drops at length are poured,  
On the rebellious race that crucified their Lord!* [Source: Poem by Henry Milman, 1820]

Having given this imperfect report on the fulfillment of Christ's prophecies concerning Jerusalem let me close with a few inferences.

First. This subject establishes the divine origin of the scriptures.

None but God can foretell future events. If therefore anyone predict future events and they come to pass exactly according to his prediction it is certain he must have been taught by inspiration of God. The events concerning Jerusalem were accomplished exactly according to the prophecies of our Saviour in every particular. Those who wrote those prophecies - that is the four evangelists are therefore authentic narrators of those prophecies: and there is no reason why their testimony ought not to be credited as much in other respects as in these predictions. That is to say the four evangelists have written the Gospels under a divine superintendence or inspiration. And in these gospels testimony is borne to the honesty integrity and piety of all the other writers of the New Testament except Paul so that what they have written may be depended on as authentic. Christ also has often borne testimony in the Gospel to the Old Testament and the word of God.

[Asterisk]

Christ foretold that fearful sights and great signs from heaven should precede and accompany the destruction of Jerusalem. Accordingly we are told by the historians that the fountains which flowed copiously for the Romans were dried up the Jews - that a stain like a sword and a comet stood over the city for a year - that in the beginning of the war a light shone round the temple in the night for half an

hour - that the massive and friendly bolts and doors of the eastern gates of the inner temple flew open at midnight – that armed chariots and phalanxes appeared in the heavens and that a certain Jew named Jesus continued almost without interruption for more than seven years to traverse the streets of Jerusalem crying out. A voice from the east a voice from the west a voice from the four winds a voice against Jerusalem and the temple a voice against bridegrooms and brides a voice against the whole people, *Wo, wo, O Jerusalem*. When scourged he neither wept nor supplicated for mercy - when retained he never gave thanks: but at last changing his note he cried *Wo to myself* also when a stone from the engines struck him dead...world.

*It is now no more,  
Nor ever shall be to the end of time,  
The Temple of Jerusalem!*

*Even so shall perish  
In its own ashes, a more glorious Temple,  
Yea God's own architecture, this vast world,  
This fated universe - the same destroyer,  
The same destruction – Earth, Earth, Earth, behold!  
And in that judgment look upon thine own!*

*Even thus amid the pride and luxury,  
Oh Earth! shall that last coming burst on thee,  
That secret country of the Son of Man.*

*When that Great Husbandman shall wave his fan,  
Sweeping, like chaff, the wealth and pomp away. [Source: Poem by Henry Millman, 1820]*

There are prophecies vastly more awful than those concerning Jerusalem that regard the impenitent. Men who are unrenewed may sleep along in fancied security and imagine that these threatenings will never be exacted. But the awful ruin of Jerusalem is a demonstrative proof that not one jot nor tittle shall fail of the threatenings of God till all be fulfilled. The curse of the law is the pains of hell forever. Awake then O sinner, awake from the delusive dream in which you are reposing. Awake before the shout of the archangel and the trump of God shall awaken you to eternal misery.

*[The top edge of the last page is torn.]*

...the gospels...God. Admit then the fulfillment of his prophecies concerning Jerusalem and we cannot consistently deny the divine origins of the other parts of the bible. We do not see how it is possible for any reasonable man to evade the force of such an argument.

Secondly. The subject shows us what man is when unrestrained by Divine Grace.

God gave up the Jews to eat the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices: and a full vent was given to their depravity to burst forth. And it exhibited a frightful inundation prostrating all reason all prudence all natural and social affections and leaving selfishness to stand alone and reign sole conqueror over the heart. And such would be the awful condition of us all did not the grace of God restrain the wickedness of our hearts. What a debt of gratitude then do we owe to God!

Finally. If God fulfilled all his threatenings against Jerusalem up to the last jot and tittle we may be sure he will execute...

Delivered

At Conway August 1823

At School Meadows December 1828

At Mount Pleasant June 1829

At Amherst College December 1836

At Amherst College August 1831

At Amherst West Parish November 1831

At Leverett May 1832

At Amherst East Parish June 1834

At Amherst College November 1855

## Sermon 195 Correspondence Between the Character of Men and That of the God They Worship Part 2

[Sermon No. 195, "Correspondence Between the Character of Men and that of the God They Worship,  
Part 2" Micah 4:5, 1823 Nov, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 3]

Micah 4:5

*For all people will walk every one in the name of his god.*

*[Hitchcock argues that the world is our true god and we pattern our own characters after those of the world.]*

Every man has before him some standard or model to which his character is assimilating. There are certain channels into which our feelings habits and thoughts run: and as a man thinketh so is he. We may not be aware that there is any such example before us to which we are more or less conforming. For various and inconstant as is man there are in every bosom certain predominant principles and biases which nature or education or grace have thrown in and which exercise a secret and controlling influence over the whole man. Surely then whatever we voluntarily choose as an object of supreme regard and worship whether it be the eternal Jehovah or imaginary divinities as I endeavoured to show in the morning must be the standard the exemplar from which our characters will be formed so that there will be come to be a general resemblance between the tenor of our conduct and the character of the God we worship. And this is no less true in regard to any object that is supreme in our affections. Tens of thousands in every land have such objects on which they are lavishing their love although perhaps they may not be aware of it. And by a forcible and scriptural figure these objects are called their gods although they may not have life. These objects are all of a worldly nature. Thus one man makes the riches of the world his god - another the honors of the world - a third its pleasures a fourth its show and splendor - a fifth his friends his wife or children. And these principal objects may be again divided. Thus in regard to worldly pleasures one man chooses luxury - another lust - another fancy - another intellect. But since these various divinities are all of a worldly nature and admit of almost endless division it will perhaps be best and it will be proper to include them all under one general head - or rather to choose a term that shall include them all. That term is the world - and this is the great god to which so much incense is offered up incessantly and whose temple is always crowded with votaries. The ancient heathen Romans had a temple called the Pantheon that is a temple dedicated to all the gods. Here each one went select the God he chose to worship and although since there were 30,000 of these divinities no two persons should happen to choose the same yet so similar was the worship paid to each that there was no confusion no contention among the devotees. All indeed were considered as offering essentially the same service. So it is in the great pantheon of the world. Each votary may here select his favorite god without offending his neighbours or producing any inconsistency in his worship. Indeed the service of the world is of such a character that when a man has become tired of one divinity he may select another and yet his feelings remain essentially the same. Indeed the love of all worldly objects is essentially the same: so that if the principle of worldly love be once established in the heart it requires but a slight effort and slight modification to turn it into a particular channel. I shall therefore in this discourse regard the world as the great divinity which men worship and endeavour to show that the general tenor of the conduct of the worshipers corresponds to the character of their divinity. This you



recollect was the second head of the subject introduced in the morning. I then endeavour to show the truth of this principle as applied in a literal sense that is to gods that have or are supposed to have a real existence and I now would endeavour to show its truth as applied in a figurative sense to the world.

But there is one truth which I would previously call to your remembrance. In Christian lands there are none who worship idols. Here the only God who is professedly served is Jehovah: and probably not one speculative atheist can be found - not one who in so many words denies the existence of the Deity. But the Scriptures say that *the fool in his heart* (not in his understanding but in his heart) *hath said There is no God*. That is he lives as if there were no God. And are there not many such in Christian lands? Certainly there are many who acknowledge the existence and attributes of Jehovah who did not make him the supreme object of their affections. But if they do not give him their supreme affections they give them to the world. It is impossible from the very nature of man that he should live a day without having some object of supreme attachment. And since there is no idol worship in Christian lands that object must be either God or the world. These are the only things presented before us as objects of affection: and let every man remember that if he does not love God supremely he loves the world supremely.

Let us now endeavour to trace out some of the predominant characteristics of that God which is denominated the world in order to ascertain whether the conduct of the worshippers correspond thereto.

And the first characteristic of the world is that it does not look beyond immediate interest.

The gold and the silver the farm the mansion and the equipage are all calculated to confine the views of the worshippers to their own aggrandizement. There is no voice in them that bids us remember the poor and needy the widow and fatherless the houseless and friendless any further than self-interest requires. The honors and distinctions of the world have too dazzling a light thrown around them to permit the eye to penetrate beyond them. The alluring inscription engraved upon them is - *sacred to self*. The sensual pleasures which the world holds out to her votaries also rivet the eye on themselves alone and urge them on blind and deaf to every other charm like the deranged insect that darts headlong into the evening taper and knows not that it is for his life. The intellectual and social pleasures of the world might seem to present an exception to this characteristic. But along with these there comes a cautioning and to the human heart a pleasant voice warning the votary to follow such pleasures no farther than self interest commands.

Now what should we suppose would be the effect of this trait in the god upon his worshipers? We should expect it would produce in them a correspondent character that is selfishness. And such is in fact the universal character of worldly minded man. They may not be aware of it - they may do many things that appear to them disinterested. But in the eye of God and if I may be allowed this expression a sagacious selfishness lies at the foundation of all their actions. It is important for the success of their interest interested views that they should maintain the good opinion of the world and they will do many deeds to secure this which to the eye of man appear to be really benevolent. Or it may be important that the friendship of certain Christians should not be forfeited and to prevent this they will perform some deeds of charity and practice some self-denial until at length they begin themselves to be fully satisfied that they possess disinterested benevolence. Whereas that sagacious selfishness of which I have spoken which thus remotely eyes its own interest lies at the bottom of the heart and is the moving spring of all these charities and sacrifices. But present before such a man the claims of perishing millions in the heathen lands and the demands of creditors or the wants of his family or neighbourhood sound so loudly in his ears that the poor heathen are dismissed with kind wish *be ye named and be ye filled*. Here

you apply the touchstone to such a man's benevolence and when you cannot touch a single string of self interest depend on it his benevolence will be changed into selfishness. Or if you talk to the worldly minded man about making a great sacrifice and self denial for the good of those beyond the reach of his own relatives and neighbours – depend upon it he will draw back his neck from the yoke. Or if you tell the rich man that he is bound to consider all his property to the Lord and to consecrate all this property to the Lord and to dispose of it as will most promote God's glory – or tell the honorable and distinguished man that he must lay all his honors at the foot of the cross and depend upon it these persons will not understand what you mean. However learned they may be in other things this is language which is sealed to them.

In the second place a negative characteristic of the world is that it is wholly wanting in everything Spiritual.

By spiritual in this place I mean that which relates to heavenly things in contradistinction from earthly things. Now it is obvious that if we search through all those objects that make up the world we shall find nothing whose tendencies are to produce holiness. No man ever imputed his conversion to the ardent pursuit of the riches honors and pleasures of the world: but on the contrary all who have been converted have testified that those things are calculated to obliterate all sense of religious things.

It is perfectly obvious then that we might expect a corresponding neglect and ignorance of Spiritual things in the votaries of this world. And we do find these things in every such person. There seems to be an impenetrable veil spread over the heart of the worldly minded man which renders them absolutely impervious to religious impressions. They repose in a deathlike slumber and and death like slumber and though they often fancy themselves to be well acquainted with the Spiritual concerns yet when that slumber is once broken they find that they are *poor and wretched and miserable and blind and naked*. And now for the first time they begin to believe that the natural man *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, etc.*

But in the third place a positive characteristic of the world is enmity against God. That is the practices which the world encourages and most of the pursuits it leads men into are directly contrary to those that will and love of God direct. The declaration of James that *the friendship of the world is enmity against God* affords conclusive proof of this.

And the same apostle in the same sentence has decided what is the character of those who love the world supremely. *Whosoever therefore says he will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*. Those who love the world supremely are certainly the friend of it and therefore they are God's enemies.

The fourth characteristic of the world is that it is arbitrary and tyrannical.

We often demand obedience of its votaries when it gives them no reward but disappointment and trouble. The chains it has prepared for them are too strong to be severed by a mortal arm and the yoke it imposes on their necks is in general oppressively galling.

And can there be any doubt concerning the characters of those who willingly submit to these instruments of tyranny? It must be servile - it is servile. The man who serves the world is a born slave. No Egyptian taskmaster - no Algerian lordling ever imposed a more severe burden upon their slaves than the world imposes on its servants. They are labouring for that which the world never bestows - viz. happiness: and though their god often abuses them most cruelly yet they take it all patiently and only

serve him the more faithfully for it like the beaten spaniel. Surely the immortal mind must in these slaves have lost its independance and its Spirit be broken down.

A fifth characteristic of the world is that it is inconstant.

To day one is exalted and flattered and tomorrow deserted cast down and trampled upon. Now the votary is admitted to the innermost shrine of the temple and his god takes him by the hand and leads him to an exceeding high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them and says all this will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me. He obeys fancying that he is about to realize all bright visions spread before him. But in a moment without any apparent reason his god frowns – casts him from the pinnacle of the mountains into the vale of poverty and obscurity and leaves him wounded and half dead.

Now what will be the effect of such fickleness which every worldly minded man soon experiences in greater less degree? It will not lead him to abandon so treacherous a guide: but it will lead him to take such measures as he thinks will prevent his failure in future. In other words he will not be very scrupulous about the means if he can attain his end. His conscience will not be very tender when his interest is concerned. At any rate he will not scruple to sacrifice his soul in the enterprise. And such is the conduct of worldly minded men certainly in the last particular in generally in regard to them all. And although nothing would be more offensive to them than to charge it upon them yet when they are converted they acknowledging it of their own accord and confess that their morality of which they felt so proud was a loose accommodating kind that would not stand much in the way of worldly interest.

The last characteristic of the world I shall mention is that it is in a high degree delusive.

Many a bright scene which this god presents before his votaries to lead them on to the enjoyment of it passes away like a dream of the night when they approach it and leaves them wandering in a dark and thorny wilderness. Many a rich pageant which he causes to pass before them clothed in all the splendor of the East proves upon a nearer approach to be *the baseless fabrick of a vision*. Many a song from the harp which falls on the ear like the musick of heaven proves to be the death march of the soul. Many a path which she has strewed with flowers and perfumes is found to be the broad way that leads to destruction. Many a bow of promise which he paints on silver cloud of futurity is discovered to be the presage of the tempest and the thunder. Indeed every votary of the world from the creation till now has heaved the sigh and shed the tear of disappointment. Yet strange to tell none of them till a ray from heaven has shot into their darkened souls have been led to suspect the constancy and faithfulness of the god they worshipped.

If the world be thus delusive surely its servile credulous devotees will be continually forming expectations never to be realized. The consequence will be a succession of disappointments to renewed hopes. And how exactly does this agree with facts. The man of the world never succeeds so well not now nor enjoys so much as he anticipates. Yet this does not destroy his confidence in the world. He imputes the failure to some other cause than insufficiency of the enjoyments themselves and renews his eager chase after some other phantom only to be again disappointed. This is a faith in the world much stronger than the Christian (to his shame be it said) ever exercises in Jehovah. This is genuine enthusiasm and for one religious enthusiast in society there are ten worldly ones.

The subject we have contemplated to day my hearers shows us the importance of obtaining correct views of the character of God. Whatever our views of him are I have shown that a correspondent

character will be formed in us. *For all people will walk every one in the name of his god.* If our ideas of Jehovah be correct we may hope our characters will essentially be essentially as he approves. But if our views of him be incorrect they will be reprobate by him. And it is striking to notice how a seemingly small difference in opinion concerning God's character will lead men so totally diverse from one another. Look for example at the Mahometan and the Christian or the Jew. All of these profess to believe in one Jehovah and their descriptions of the divine attributes are nearly the same. But what a world of difference in their view and characters and all resulting too from their diversity however slight it may seem in regard to the character of God. The man who believes God to be so merciful he will not punish any of the human race in another world seems only to have his eye too exclusively fixed on the attribute of mercy: and yet this slight diversity of sentiment leads him to adopt a system of religion so far removed from that of the man who believes in eternal punishment that it must be called another Gospel. Feeling then how important are correct views on this fundamental article of faith I have determined by the leave of divine providence to deliver as occasion may offer a concrete series of discourses on the divine attributes to which I invite the special attention of the youth of this congregation. Indeed it is there improvement I have mainly in view.

Again this subject shows us original source of religious error. It begins in erroneous views of the divine character - and although at first the difference may be small yet the emerging path diverges rapidly and often terminates at the antipodes. The proper way then to bring man to unity of faith is to make them agree concerning the character of God. When this is done they will no longer differ in anything essential.

Finally how dangerous it is to set our supreme affections on any other being than Jehovah!

I need not caution this audience against the worship of heathen divinities. But I need caution them against the worship of the world. For I do fear that this is the idol of very many of our hearts. I fear that this is the reason that God's Holy Spirit has abandoned us to our chosen way - the reason why iniquity abounds and meets us with its brazen point at midday - the reason why the conference and the prayer meeting are deserted - the reason why there is a deathlike chill settled upon the hearts of Christians. O let it not be forgotten my hearers that we either love and serve God supremely or the world supremely. Let it not be forgotten that our characters correspond to that of the God we worship. Let it not be forgotten that the one character will be our passport to heaven the other our passport to hell.

Delivered

At Conway November 1823

## Sermon 196 Correspondence Between the Character of Men and the Character of God They Worship Part 1

[Sermon No. 196, "Correspondence Between the Character of Men and that of the God They Worship, Part I" Micah 4:5, 1823 Nov, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 3]

Micah 4:5

*For all people will walk every one in the name of his God.*

*[Comparison of Hinduism, Mahometanism, Judaism, and Christianity.]*

The phrase *to walk* is often put figuratively in Scripture to signify the general tenor of the conduct. Thus some are said to walk after the flesh others to walk after or in the Spirit: some to walk by faith - others by sight - some to walk in the truth - in the light in the fear or way or commandments of God - others to walk in darkness – in falsehood in craftiness and many other things which are too numerous and which it unnecessary to mention. By the name of God is sometimes meant in Scripture himself or his attributes or his titles are his worship and service or his will and many other things relating to God as it would be easy to show by examples. To walk in the name of God is the same thing as to walk with or before or after God and implies a regulation of the conduct words and thoughts agreeably to his will - a belief of his declarations - and a constant impression of his presence. And when the language is applied to any other God than Jehovah as it is in the text the meaning is the same.

The following sentiment then appears to be contained in the text - viz. *that the general tenor of a man's conduct will correspond to the character of the god he now worships.*

The prophet in the context is giving a description of the universal diffusion of the gospel and the pure and peaceable worship of Jehovah in the millennium: and if I do not misapprehend his meaning he introduces the text as an evidence or illustration of the blessed influence of the gospel in those happy days. For if even those who worship false gods are nevertheless faithful to them and their characters are conformed to that worship and to the characters and requirements of those lying vanities much more may we expect that those who worship and serve the true God should exhibit a correspondent character and when the great majority or perhaps all shall adopt this worship and idols shall be all destroyed surely the world will exhibit a delightful scene - *When they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree and none shall make them afraid.*

The principle that seems to be contained in the text that the general tenor of a man's conduct will correspond to the character of the god he worships is of more importance than we are generally apt to imagine. Here is the root of most of the diversities in religious doctrine and practice that exist. It may therefore be profitable to devote this discourse to the illustration of the principle. And it is true in a literal sense and in a figurative sense.

1. This principle is true in a literal sense.

I make a distinction between those beings whether real or not whom the worshiper supposes to have a true and proper existence such as the gods of the heathen and those inanimate things which are called gods merely because men appear supremely devoted to them such as worldly riches pleasures and honors. In relation to both these classes of gods I say the principle in the text is true.

It ought here however to be remembered that in speaking of the god a man worships I mean not so much the being which his understanding denominates God as that to which his heart yields its service. A man for instance may acknowledge Jehovah to be his God while at the same time his heart bows down to idols or he may visibly bow down to idols while his heart to the true God. As did name Naaman in the idol temple of Rimmon. A mere speculative acknowledgment of any god does not operate at all upon the conduct so long as the heart is set supremely upon some other object. And therefore in this discourse I speak of those gods which the heart worships. And I say that the general tenor of a man's conduct will correspond to the character of these. This is true first in a literal sense or in regard to those beings which are supposed by the worshiper to have a real positive existence.

I begin with the polytheist or the worshiper of many gods.

A vast majority of the world always have been and still are of this description: so that we shall have a good opportunity of ascertaining the influence of their worship upon their characters.

Let us first attend to the characters of the gods of the heathen. The most exalted and most perfect of these in the most polished nations of antiquity were represented as governed by the worst of human passions as carrying on wars with one another as wreaking their vengeance on those defenseless mortals who had incurred their displeasure as deceitful fraudulent and given to the grossest lust and appetite. And if such were the most perfect among the gods what must have been the character of the worst! For in all ages the heathens have worshipped not merely those beings they fancied to be good but also the very worst and the most stupid. Scarcely a vice scarcely a crime can be named that has not been deified. They have paid their adorations - to stones to trees to rivers to blocks of wood to brutes to lust anger revenge and to devils. Among the 30,000 deities of the Greeks and Romans not one can be named that was not represented as guilty of crimes that would disgrace the most contemptible character in human society - or as too striped to commit iniquity. But modern idolatry is still more disgusting than ancient and among the 330 million of the gods of this Hindustan not one represents any virtue!

The manner in which the heathen worshipped their gods shows conclusively their ideas of the character of these deities. To say nothing of the abominable licentiousness of which every heathen temple is a hot bed I refer alone to the rite of human sacrifices. These are made to appease their gods - and millions of human beings have thus been offered their polluted altars.

And now is it not natural to expect that the people whose fancied gods are of the character described will in a great measure resemble them! These gods are the most perfect beings of which they have any notions and these of course are the models by which they form their own characters. What is practiced by the gods who formed them and whom they worship cannot be thought wrong in the devotees. They cannot be expected to be more perfect than those who created them.

To this view accords the page of history. From every heathen land ancient or modern civilized or savage

a similar record of domination and crime has reached us. All impartial witnesses concur in describing the character of the heathen as agreeing with the character of their gods. Are these deities supremely selfish - so are their worshipers. Are they lustful - sanguinary - perfidious - cruel - unnatural - arbitrary - revengeful - hateful and hating one another - so are the people. *Amidst a pretty large acquaintance with the heathen in India*, says the lamented Ward, *I have never seen one man who appeared to fear God and work righteousness*. On the contrary the language of the apostles seems most strikingly applicable to them all: *There is none righteous no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. Their throat is an open sepulchre (the impurity of their conversation is beyond all description); with their tongue they have used deceit (they are finished adepts in the art of deception) the poison of asps is under their lips (for slander and abuse they stand unrivalled even amongst the most degraded of mankind) their feet are swift to shed blood (oh how strikingly is this exemplified in the easiness with which the Hindoos go into the work of immolating the poor and other human victims!) and the very of peace have they not known.* (Ward's Sutte, p. 37)

Paul however has given us even a full description of the character of the heathen than that just quoted: *And even as they did not like to obtain God in the knowledge, says he, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient: Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things are worthy of death, not only do them, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

Our first example then supports conclusively the principle laid down in the beginning that the general tenor of a man's conduct will correspond to the character of the God he worships. Let us proceed to another example.

A second large division of the Christian world is Mahometanism. And here I must refer to a remark made in the beginning of the discourse that I intend by the god a man worships not that character which his understanding assigns to this deity but that which his heart adopts. A man may give an abstract representation of the being he worships which is spiritual and holy while his heart may unite with this or substitute for this all the grossness of materialism and sin. This I apprehend to be the case of the Mahometans. Their idea of God as given in the Koran is borrowed from the Old and New Testament and is therefore essentially correct. But this is not the God their hearts worship. Other things are added in the Koran which strip off the spirituality and glory of Jehovah and he is reduced altogether to such an one as themselves. One or two facts will I think prove this. The Mahometan tells you that the Koran itself is the uncreated word of God - that God is in every line of it and that every line of it is God. From here it is obvious that in his mind there is no very marked distinction between matter and spirit. Look too at the nature of the Mahometan paradise. It is merely a scene of voluptuousness and its chief excellency consists in the most vile and beastly of all indulgences. Yet this paradise is described as the spot where their God peculiarly dwells - and all this eternal round of sensuality takes place before his very throne and he is the author of it and the supporter of it. Now I ask whether the men who are looking forward to such a heaven as this can have any idea at all of the purity and holiness of God! The most abandoned profligate in Christian lands shrinks from the thought of indulging his violence in the immediate presence of God because he has been taught that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. It must be then that the Mahometan has low and debasing apprehensions of the God he worships - in other words his God and the God of the bible are very different beings.

In perfect conformity to such views of God is the general tenor of the conduct of the Mahometans. Its prevailing characteristic is a low and stupid sensuality. He lives only to gratify his abominable lusts and when he dies his brightest hopes are that he is going to a place where he shall be permitted to indulge them without alloy and without satiety. Give him correct views of God's character and he would prefer any other place to heaven.

Another division of the religious world is Judaism. And since the Jews derive their motives of deity altogether from the Old Testament we might suppose it would be correct. And so it is in the main; it is entirely so in all their abstract descriptions because these are in the words of their scriptures. But the discerning eye may perceive that in their feelings they circumscribe or rather destroy the justice of God. A Pharisaical self-appropriating Spirit runs in the very blood of a Jew and induces him to limit the mercies of God to his own nation, to fancy himself to be actually a peculiar favorite of heaven and leads him to despise all who are not of the stock of Abraham and the seed of Israel. It was not till God had wrought a miracle that he convinced Peter that he *was not a respecter of persons* uniformly when the apostles preached that such was the character of God and that he had an equal regard to the Gentiles with themselves the Jews were exasperated to the highest pitch.

Now what will be the consequences upon the heart of such a tasteful view of God's justice. It will almost inevitably lead him to foster pride in his bosom and to close his eyes against conviction. And a deep-rooted and unconquerable pride and unshaken tenacity of opinion and blind resistance of evidence has always been and still are notable characteristics of the Jews. Is it not obvious then that these peculiarities of character are the result of their erroneous apprehensions of the character of God? And is not this the original cause of all the misery they suffer?

The Christian religion is the last class which I shall adduce as examples of the truth of the principle contained in the text. And although professed believers in scripture profess to derive their notions of the divine character from them: yet their views of it are widely diverse. I have only time to allude to a few of those diversities.

There are none however who in so many words deny any of the attributes of God and it would be no difficult task to give a general description of the divine character in which all would agree. But when different men come to explain the meaning of the terms they use we find a very great difference among them.

One man has such a sense of the holiness of God that he is led to regard all sin even the least transgressions as an infinite evil and in itself deserving of everlasting punishment. This view leads him to watch scrupulously over his conduct and to avoid the appearance of evil: and it tends also to produce very deep and pungent regrets whenever he offends and pungent regrets whenever he offends and painful [????] for the fate of bold offenders.

Another man looks upon the holiness of God in a very different light. He thinks there is nothing in the divine character which requires God thus to look upon sin as an evil that is immeasurable. Although he does not deny it to be an evil yet he cannot conceive how God can regard it as infinite since it can not thwart any of his purposes nor proceed a step farther than his will permits. The consequences of such a belief will be the reverse of those just pointed out.

Another man proceeds still farther. So low are his conceptions of the evil of sin and so high his apprehension of divine mercy that he cannot believe that God will ever punish eternally any part of the



human race; he regards fear more in the light of infinity than of a willful offense against God. It is needless to say that such a man will not feel his view of being very watchful over his conduct - not of divine grace and that he will believe in universal salvation and consequently feel no great anxiety about justice.

One man has such a sense of the holiness and immutability of God that he firmly believes that it is morally impossible for God to pardon the sins of men unless an atonement be made by a being who possesses a divine nature. The effect of this sentiment upon the man will be to cause him never to ask of God the forgiveness of his sins only through a mediator and to produce grateful feelings towards that Saviour who has atoned for his sins - and to inspire him with a deep sense of the evil nature of sin and exulted views of divine love in processing a ransom.

Another man has such a view of God's character that he imagines an atonement unnecessary; and the consequence is he goes directly to God and feels no need of a Saviour and depends for pardon upon his repentance and reformation so broad are his apprehensions of the divine mercy.

One man believes it to be so essential to the divine character that God should have had a plan perfect and entire in the formation of the universe and that every event is so ordered that it shall tend to produce a given end. In other words he believes God hath foreordained whatever comes to pass: and that he acts as a sovereign having mercy on whom he will have mercy. Thanking whom he will. It is obvious such a view tends to humble the man who maintains it deeply in the dust and make him feel his absolute dependance and the inadequacy of his unassisted reason to understand the ways and judgments of God.

But another man rejects such sentiments as highly derogatory to the character of God and in his view it makes him an arbitrary tyrant and reduces man to a machine and nullifies human efforts. Such a man to say the least must have very different apprehensions of the divine character from the man who believes all this.

One man supposes that though there is but one God yet he exists as Father Son and Spirit between whom although their essence be the same there is a real and not merely a nominal distinction. And further he believes that the Son became incarnate and assumed human nature into union with the divine and that this human nature constitutes a part of his complex nature at this moment. Such a belief causes a man to pay equal and undivided honors to the Father the Son and the Spirit and to feel for each of those peculiar affections which their several offices demand.

But on the other hand some men deny this threefold distinction in the Godhead regarding the Holy Spirit only as an attribute or a name of God and Christ as a created being or a mere man. Of course they would regard it idolatry to render any worship to the Son and the Spirit: and they will not ask for the influences of the Spirit in any such sense as the man does who believes in his personality. And it is a tendency of such views to produce different apprehensions of most of the other doctrines usually connected - with that of the Trinity and of course to influence the practice.

Such are the evidences that a man's conduct will correspond to the character of the god he worships - or rather such are the evidences that this is true in a literal sense. It is also true in a figurative sense. But the consideration of this part of the subject must be deferred till this afternoon. In the mean time let us remember that there is but one true God - he has but one character - that there is but one volume on earth from which we can derive a knowledge of it and that it is nothing but the depravity of our hearts

that can prevent us from attaining that knowledge. May God subdue that depravity that we may know him and his son Jesus Christ whom he has sent whom to know is life eternal.

Delivered

At Conway November 1823

## Sermon 200 Existence of God

[Sermon No. 200, "Existence of God," Deuteronomy 4:39, 1823 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 4]

Deuteronomy 4:39

*Know therefore this day, and consider it in thy heart,  
that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath.*

My intention this morning is to prove that article of our faith on which the whole of religion rests viz. the existence of one supreme and absolutely perfect God. I undertake this proof not because I suppose any among us are or are likely to become speculative atheists. There may be those who believe in their hearts that there is no God: but the monster who openly affirms no God to exist is happily not to be found in Christian lands. Yet it is important that we all know what is the evidence on which the being of Jehovah rests: otherwise our faith even in this fundamental article of religion will be feeble and wavering. The axioms of mathematics are denied and doubted by no one yet we should think strange of that mathematician who was unacquainted with them. And so though the existence of God be acknowledged by all yet it is highly improper that the Christian or the inhabitant of Christian lands should not know the evidence on which his being rests. The fact that all do acknowledge this great truth of religion has a tendency to cause men to neglect the proofs of it since nothing tends more strongly to excite a spirit of investigation than opposition.

But to waive preliminary remarks I proceed to exhibit the evidences of the existence of one God. In support of this position I shall depend upon three principal arguments.

The first argument is founded on this principle, *that every effect is necessarily connected with a cause.*

This principle however has been denied by some although it would seem to be a self evident proposition: it must therefore be proved.

To suppose that events may occur without any cause is contrary to universal experience. Experience is altogether on the other side. All beings and events so far as we are acquainted with them have proceeded from something foreign to them that is from some cause. If it be admitted that some events occur whose cause we cannot discover all must allow that there are no instances in which events can be proved to be casual - that is without a cause. Hence then to say that events may be casual is to assert what is entirely destitute of proof. And the proof we have is on the opposite side. It is then a mere supposition without the shadow of evidence and it is absurd to found any opinions therefore upon such a supposition.

Again we can form no idea of an event that did not proceed from some cause. That is whenever we perceive an effect the mind inevitably reverts to a cause. That cause may in some instances be hid from immediate observation: but the mind always supposes it to exist and it is not possible to form an idea of an event insulated from its cause since the nature of the cosmos must determine the nature of the effect.

Finally to dwell no longer on this objection which atheistical philosophers have sometimes made to the principle above laid down I remark that of them be no necessary connection between cause and effect then all reasoning is at an end. For it will follow that there is no necessary connection between the different parts of proposition or that one truth does not necessarily result from other truths since there is no necessary connection between antecedent and consequent. So that we are at once left in utter and irretrievable scepticism, contradiction and absurdity. There be not a necessary connection between the cause and the effect.

Now let this principle be admitted the existence of God will necessarily follow from the existence of the universe. Select man as an example out of the universe. Every one knows that he exists and that he did not exist always. There must therefore have been a cause for his existence. That cause is God. For that wisdom and power which are capable of creating such a being as man are capable of creating anything. To this argument no answer can be given except such as is mere sophistry founded on subtle and unmeaning metaphysical distinctions. The whole of Mr. Hume's arguments to disprove the existence of God amount to no more than this.

The second argument for the existence of God is founded on this principle, *that design proves a designer.*

The case of a man unacquainted with a watch accidentally meeting with one has often been employed to illustrate the subject and very properly. Suppose such an one in passing over an extensive desert to pick up a watch and examine its mechanism. He would perceive numerous wheels set in motion by springs and all placed so as to move regularly and without interference. And upon further examination he would find the grand object of all these motions was to move the indices on the face of the watch. He would find that if a single wheel was taken away the whole system would be deranged. Now I ask would not this man immediately conclude that this watch had some one to design or invent it? Could he for a moment suppose all this to be the result of chance - that the mere fortuitous concourse of atoms would have produced a piece of mechanism so perfect and wonderful? This is impossible. The idea of a designer must have immediately entered his mind although he never heard of a goldsmith.

Apply now this illustration to the works of nature. The mechanisms of a watch and of the nicest production of art becomes a mere clumsy production when compared with the mechanism of creation. The wonderful complication of parts - their tendency to produce certain ends and the unity of design that appears in the universe must and do strike the most careless observer. Volumes might easily be written and have been written on the subject. Whether we survey the systems of suns and worlds that roll in such grand and harmonious order through the heavens or descend to this earth and examine the various parts of the mineral animal and vegetable kingdoms. The same adaptations of the various complicated parts to produce certain important ends - the same exact and skillful arrangement of these parts would be alike conspicuous. Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands is the number of these parts: yet none seem misplaced or superfluous - each has its proper position in the system and each conduces to the perfection of that system. Throughout the whole creation that comes under our notice not an individual thing occurs concerning which it can be said the object of this appears to be to disturb the unity of design observable in some portions of creation. If some objects occur which to our limited conceptions appear to be of no use there are none whose original tendency is to destroy the order and system of the creation.

Such being the marks of design in the works of creation what mind is not irresistibly led to the

conclusion that it must have had a designer! And that designer is God. And how great and glorious must be that being who could construct a system so vast so various so complicated as this universe! To his wisdom and power we can assign no limits. This is the grand argument for the existence of God that strikes common minds most forcibly and which bids defiance to all the assaults of atheistical sophistry. Every vegetable every leaf every flower every animal presents overwhelming evidence of the existence of an all perfect Being who constructed it and leads us to the conclusion of the apostle that *the invisible things of him are clearly seen from the creation, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.*

The third and last argument I shall mention for the being of God is the existence of the Bible.

In order to present this argument in a true light let us suppose an intelligent man who had never heard of the bible to have it put into his hands along with the histories of nations. Let him read this bible without being told that it came from God or even that any such being existed. He would have here find the history of actions performed by holy men of old much beyond the natural powers of man to accomplish - yet attested by numerous and competent witnesses. He would perceive numerous events to be foretold in the scriptures and by consulting profane history he would find that they happened at the predicted period. He would remark a system of doctrines and precepts in the bible far more perfect than any human wisdom could invent. And this system was introduced by a series of miracles and stupendous events unaccountable on the common principles of our nature. Now what would be the conclusion of a man who was made acquainted with these facts? He perceives a series of things far above the power and wisdom of man to accomplish. Must he conclude that all this was the work of a superior being. If he supposes that being who formed the scriptures to be created the enquiry will immediately arise who created such a being and thus he will be ultimately led if not immediately to the original first cause of all things which is God. On such principles I do not see why the existence of the bible is not as good proof of the being of God as the existence of the planetary system or of the human body.

Those conversant with this subject will perceive that I have passed over a noted metaphysical argument for the existence of God on which much reliance has been placed. It is Dr. Clark celebrated theory of necessary existence. And I have omitted it because I very much doubt whether there is any force in it. At least the mind after examining it remains in doubt notwithstanding all the parade and all the ability with which it has been defended.

It will now be proper after presenting these arguments in proof of the divine existence to take a short notice of those objections that have been stated against the being of a God. For strange as it may seem to a Christian audience the existence of one supreme God has been frequently and with great ability opposed. And these objections have nearly as much plausibility about them as those which are urged in opposition to the other fundamental doctrines of religion. And I cannot but believe that the reason why there are so few atheists and so many who reject other important doctrines is because the general belief of God's existence has rendered its denial unfashionable and shocking while it is rather the reverse in regard to other important truths.

In the first place it is objected to the being of a God that the state the world is in forbids the supposition. The world is full of disorder suffering death and depravity: and if it were made by a being every way perfect as God must be if he exist it would not be left thus imperfect.

There is not time on this occasion to discuss the origin of moral evil which constitutes the main part of

this objection that there are some things in the world of which we cannot understand the use is unquestionable: and alike true is it we cannot explain certain occurrences around us. But how does this show that they are not nevertheless the work of God? If we were omniscient and knew all the relations and consequences of things and still should see certain things that were useless or inexplicable there would be reason to conclude that a perfect being was not the creator of them. But how ridiculous for us ignorant and shortsighted as we are to assume that certain occurrences around us are inexplicable and unworthy the character of God! Especially when we behold around us innumerable instances in which the agency and superintendence of a Divine Mind are clearly discernible and the cases of disorder and misery are merely the exceptions! Is it not absurd to neglect to reason from what we do know and form our conclusions from what we do not know!

In the second place it is said by atheists that things may have existed in an eternal series and therefore it is unnecessary to suppose the existence of God. That is to say the production of one thing from another has been going on forever and there was never a period when this process commenced.

It is unnecessary to enter into a protracted recitation of this notion. Suffice it to say that since every individual in this supposed series is an unit and every collection of units how ever great must be numerable it is absolutely impossible such a series should be infinite or eternal. Again each individual of the series must have had a beginning and therefore was not eternal. And furthermore if the number of individual men for instance in this series be infinite as the objection supposes then the number of their eyes must be twice as great and the number of their fingers ten times and the hairs of their heads many thousand times as great - that is many thousand times greater than infinite. Finally the first individual of this series was at an infinite distance from us by the supposition. Suppose his son to have been forty years younger. Now this son must have been either at an infinite or a finite distance from us. If infinite then the infinite distance of the father was forty years longer than the infinite distance of the son: if infinite then forty years added to a finite distance will make it infinite.

Thirdly other atheists assert that the existence of things is casual.

This assertion implies a denial of the necessary connection between cause and effect. But if there be no such connection then it is impossible as I have already shown to prove it by reasoning since there is no connection between the premises and the conclusion: in other words the supposition that things are casually produced is a mere unsupported assertion and stands exactly on the same grounds as the declaration that the soul of man is of a square figure - or its colour green. And not only is this atheistical notion destitute of proof, but there is overwhelming contrary proof. If there are not marks of design in the creation it is impossible to conceive of proof. The twenty four letters of the alphabet are capable of being placed in more than 600,000 millions of billions of horizontal positions with respect to one another and if these letters were thrown promiscuously into the air the chance of their falling in any one of these given positions is only as one to 600,000 millions of billions. But in the human frame are more than a million of parts. To express the different horizontal positions of which these are capable would require more than a million of figures and express their vertical and oblique positions would demand many millions more. And the whole combined could be expressed by the multiplication of these inconceivable sums. The chance therefore that the various parts of the human body should assume a particular position on the supposition that they are casual is as the number one to this immense product. And the chance that all the millions of the race should possess exactly the same organization is vastly less than this. The chance against the original formation of these parts is still less in an immeasurable degree. And after they were formed it is certain that they had no power within themselves to become united: and even if this difficulty be got over the body thus united would be

merely a dead mass of matter destitute of a soul. He who can believe all these things to be within the power of chance can believe any thing.

It would be easy to pursue the answer to this objection through volumes: and there are one or two other atheistical objections to the being of a God. But the principal ones have been noted and I trust we are all convinced of the madness of that man who denies the Divine existence and are prepared to believe that it is only *the fool who hath said in his heart there is no God*. Let us remember that it is the heart that is the source of unbelief not only in regard to the existence of God but also in regard to other important doctrines of religion. The Scriptures inform us that the worldly wisdom knew not God: that is they did not discover his existence by the mere exercise of reason. It were originally no doubt a matter of revelation. But after the view of the subject we have taken at this time none of us can suppose that men did not discover evidence of God's being in perfections because there was a deficiency of evidence in the works of creation. But it was owing to the depravity of their hearts that they did not perceive that evidence. As soon as revelation declared that the Deity existed and directed us to creation for the proof the clew was furnished us for enfolding and understanding that evidence. If so powerful and fatal then be the influence of a corrupt heart upon our religious enquiries let us all my hearers take heed to ourselves that our hearts be right in the sight of God and then we shall be prepared to understand and embrace the truths of natural and revealed religion. But if the love of God be not shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost if we are not renewed in the temper of our minds it will be owing to the mere mercy of God if we are not left to disbelieve those essentials of religion whose denial will bring upon us a swift destruction.

Delivered

At Conway December 1823

Read to the junior class Amherst College November 1826

## Sermon 201 Mens Characters Differently Estimated by God and Man

[Sermon No. 201, "Men's Character Differently Estimated by God and Man," I Samuel 16:7, 1823 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 4]

I Samuel 16:7

*The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the  
outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*

The time had come when the wickedness and maladministration of King Saul was too great to be endured and the Lord directed the prophet Samuel to go and anoint one of the sons of Jesse as a token that he was chosen to rule the kingdom. As the sons of Jesse passed in succession before the prophet he was struck with the engaging countenance and lofty stature of Eliab and concluded at once that he was designated by the Lord to the distinguished office. But the Lord reproved him for his haste and erroneous judgment and then added the general and very important truth in the text. The mere reading of that text is sufficient to make it understood and every man assents at once to its truth. It is not necessary therefore to spend any time in explaining or probing the sentiments this passage contains. But it may be profitable to illustrate it by an appeal to examples. I wish to show how very different the human character often appears to the eye of God from what it does to the eye of man. As it is always desirable to have a logical arrangement of thoughts in a discourse my first class of examples will relate to the ordinary intercourse of social life the second class will relate to the moral character and the third class to the religious character.

Our Savior warned his disciples to *beware of men* and this caution is needful not only in relation to religion but also with respect to the ordinary intercourse of social life. Constituted as we are it is necessary that we have a daily intercourse with those in whose society our lot is cast and with some that intercourse must be intimate if we would not be thought misanthropic. But the world has always been full of bitter complaints of treacherous friendships and many a heart has been rent asunder by the brutal hand of the deceiver. In the artless and unsuspecting season of youth an unprincipled and treacherous friend insinuates himself into your esteem and wins your attachment. You unbosom to him the inmost secrets of your soul endeavour all in your power to promote his welfare and fancy that you know his whole soul and that nothing but sincerity and disinterestedness sway his bosom. But beneath all this specious outside deep in the dark recesses of a heart that shines the light the eye of God perceives that treacherous purpose which under the mask of friendship is aiming a dagger at the peace and happiness of its victim.

Another man has designs upon your property. He professes to place in you the greatest confidence and by committing some of his own interests into your power - by affecting a generous liberality in his presents and his bargains and an abhorrence of the mean arts of intrigue he insensibly banishes every lingering suspicion from your bosom and at length succeeds in fixing his talons upon your possessions and then the visor drops and his selfish abominable purpose stands forth in broad daylight. But before that period how totally unsuspecting you were of what lurked in his heart! Yet the eye of God saw the darker design wrapped as it was in the thick folds of deception.



Perhaps a man has designs upon your reputation and when he enters your heart it is only to find out the vulnerable point in your character to which he may direct his assaults. You fancy him to be one of your most faithful defenders. But how great your vexation and disappointment when you find him scattering the poisoned arrows of slander and spitting forth the venom of envy. But the I of God saw at its first existence the rottenness of his heart.

A man introduces himself to your acquaintance whose manners are polished whose address is gentle and whose whole appearance is prepossessing. A prejudice in his favour rises in your mind and dear bought experience alone satisfies you that while the external appearances captivated you his heart was hateful and abominable in the sight of God.

One man through some lucky circumstance comes to be looked upon by man as a prodigy of knowledge and the oracle of wisdom and his name resounds from one land to another; while another surrounded by poverty and struggling with a thousand difficulties is unknown by his fellow man; although he is marked down in the records of heaven as vastly more learned and wise than the favourite of the public.

What a vast difference also is there between the reception men give one another in the circles of fashion and company and their feelings toward one another which God witnesses in their hearts. Often a man gives his neighbour a hearty welcome to his house or importunes him with great earnestness to visit him while there rankles in his heart towards that neighbor the deadliest hatred and in reality he is grieved and disappointed at his presence. Yet such deception is regarded by the customs of modern society as harmless. But how shocking must it appear in the view of that Being said who has said *Wherefore putting away lying speaks every man truth with his neighbour.*

Finally look at the ambitious demagogue who is seeking popularity. How complaisant kind and condescending is he in public! How full of humility and gentleness! But God who looks on his heart sees within him an overbearing pride a supreme contempt for those he attempts to please and a strong desire to invade their rights and liberties and trample on all that is dear to them.

The second class of examples I proposes to present relates to the moral character.

By morality in this place I mean only that course of good conduct which the general consent and safety of society requires in other words I mean those decencies and externally good deeds which men are prompted to perform solely from a regard to the good opinion of their fellow men without taking into view at all the will or glory of God. The one may be called worldly morality the other Christian morality. Now it cannot be doubted that the fear of worldly disgrace does operate as a powerful check in restraining the lusts of men who have no fear of God before their eyes. But it is obvious that if they can indulge these evil propensities in secret and the same time maintain a public decency of conduct they will eagerly embrace the opportunity. And the records of heaven would testify nay the records of earth do testify that such motives are not uncommon. Who has not met with the person whose words in your presence *were smoother than butter but war was in his heart: whose words were softer than oil yet were they drawn swords.* He seemed to you to be possessed of the tenderest regard for your feelings and character and joined you in condemning evil speaking most pointedly. But follow him into the society of his intimate friends and then the venom of his heart displays itself and his slanderous tongue sets on foot the false and exaggerated story while he delights to see those whose character his malice has blackened distressed and oppressed by his lashes.

It is no uncommon thing also to meet with the man who talks much and loudly of his strict regard to right and honesty in his dealings: but who endeavours in his bargains to sell his property for much more than he supposes to be its real value by concealing its defects and who does not scruple to take advantage of those who are poor straitened and compelled to submit without a murmur to the hardest terms. These are indeed the methods by which very many have amassed large possessions and built splendid mansions and provided elegant equipage who nevertheless we resent the charge of being dishonest or unfair in their dealings. How very differently is that conduct viewed by the omniscient and holy God! His language to such is - *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.*

Nor is it a less frequent instance to find men who live along from from year to year as regular and decent members of society and who assent to all that is said concerning temperance and chastity who nevertheless are in the constant habit of indulging some vile lust in secret. Such are white sepulchres beautiful indeed without but within full of dead men's bones and all manner of corruption. How hateful in the sight of God to such a man's heart! And how dreadful will be the disclosure that will take place at the day of judgment!

Finally how false an estimate should we form of the morality of families if we were to judge by occasional visits merely! You enter the habitation of your neighbour and all is harmony and love. Not only are you treated with kindness and attention but the different members of the family seem solicitous to please one another and no unkind language falls from their lips. But what does the ear of God hear in that same habitation when you are gone! Perhaps the parents reproach and storm at one another in the presence of their household. The child catches the sour and fretful temper of the father and mother and the strife and bitterness are kept up between their posterity. Perhaps too (shocking depravity!) the oath and the curse are vociferated from the father and reechoed from the mouth of the children.

The third class of examples I would produce relates to the religious character.

And must I begin with the minister at the altar? Alas the records of human depravity tell us that while some take upon themselves the holy garments of Aaron they carry within them the heart of Uzziah. Some while they invite others to partake of offers of salvation know nothing of its power in themselves. Some while declaring the glorious truths of the Gospel with their lips disbelieve it all in their hearts and secretly sneer at the credulity of their hearers: some while they recommend a holy life to others do themselves lead a life most unholy. And if there be any class of hypocrites on whom we should suppose the fire of the Lord would flash and consume them it is him who thus profanes the holy of holies and daringly bids defiance to omnipotence.

It is hardly less painful to recur for another example to the church of Christ. But we know that in the days of Peter *the time had come when judgment must begin at the house of God.* And that time has often recurred. I look around the communion board and how still and solemn the scene of how sincere every countenance. But God looketh on the heart and there perhaps he sees many not having on the wedding garment. In the heart of one he sees an entire scepticism in regard to the great doctrines of religion and perceives of the motors that brings him to that table is the hope of promoting his worldly interest. In another heart nay in many hearts he sees a supreme love to the world and of course a

destitution of love to himself. In another heart which fancies itself to be born again Jehovah sees the dark veil of self-deception. But to the eye of man these various communicants exhibit perhaps nothing which is decidedly inconsistent with the Christian character. Yet God stamps on them the inscription *thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.*

Another character professedly Christian is also seen by the eye of omniscience in a very different light from what he is seen by man. Men look upon him and see in every look and motion something indicative of a soul that is remarkably devoted to God and dead to the world and every word he utters there is the savour of sanctity. He goes so far beyond ordinary Christians in his own opinion and that of others in his self denial and zeal that he is led to condemn most others with severity and to regard himself almost the only real believer to be found - and there are scarcely any whose communion table is pure enough for him. In short the world marks him down as an eminent saint. But God marks him down as a consummate hypocrite and perceives his heart to be overflowing with the leaves and the gall of Spiritual pride without any admixture of the sincere milk of the Gospel. Not indeed that all men who manifest great zeal and devotedness to religion are really deceivers and hypocrites. But I mean only that there have been a few instances in the church in which a false and a furious zeal has been mistaken for that humble patient persevering Spirit of Christ. Such however after a time usually foam out their own shame and exhibit the hidden rottenness of their hearts.

On the other hand there have been instances in which real humble believers through diffidence or ignorance or other unfavorable circumstances have been so backward in a public defence of the Gospel and so cautious and modest in regard to their own experience that they have given even their brethren reason to fear the reality of their religion: while at the same time the eye of God sees in that man's heart his own image deeply stamped and his own love burning in secret with a lively flame. His closet is the spot where he wrestles with God mourns and laments over his seeming cowardice in the cause of Christ and humbles himself most deeply and offers an acceptable sacrifice to God: while the loud and blistering professor scarcely knows what is the meaning of communion with God.

*[Inserted sheet]*

If we look around us during the season of prayer in this house on the Sabbath we see all standing in the attitude of humble worshippers - all rise expressly for the purpose of offering up a prayer to God. But what does God see in many of our hearts. In one he witnesses little but worldly thoughts - in another a disposition to criticize the performance in another a disposition to sneer at the whole business of public worship in another vile imaginations in another a murmuring spirit because the prayer is not sooner ended. Indeed there can be no doubt that in very many hearts God does not see a single thought or desire rising to him! This is solemn mockery! This is showing irreverence!

*[End of insert]*

Again it is no uncommon thing to find men who though making no pretensions to personal religion do nevertheless profess to reverence the Gospel and believe its truth and earnestly desire to have their hearts renewed. But a very different view perhaps does the heart of such an one present in the view of God. He discerns a bitter hostility to religion and a sneering disbelief of all its important doctrines and a contempt for the professors of the Gospel.

Finally: a case like the following has sometimes presented itself in the world. A man rises to distinction among his fellows and whenever he appears in public he attracts the glare of the multitude and

salutations in the marketplace and the highest seats at feasts and many an envious eye is turned on him because appears so happy and eminent. But no one envies or admires the poor man his neighbour who has scarcely a place to lay his head and whose name is never mentioned except as a bye word or another name for misery. But it may be that in the view of God this picture is entirely reversed. The poor man may be one of those who have chosen the good part that shall never be taken from him and his hovel is made a Bethel and his heart an altar holy to the Lord. It may be that he lives a life of faith and prayer and amid all his outward poverty he may be drawing down the riches of paradise and God may be pouring into his soul joy unspeakable and full of glory. He may be one whom God regards with complacency and loves with an everlasting love and for whom a mansion is prepared in heaven and angels are waiting to receive him into fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. But the rich and honorable man may be one who casts off fear and restrains prayer before God. His heart may be filled with pride and enmity against God and his character this whole course of life and feelings of heart be odious in the extreme to a holy God. He may be one whom God has given up to work wickedness greedily from whom he has taken his grace. He may be one whose fate is already sealed up for everlasting destruction – and the very lowest bed in hell may be waiting for him and the Spirits of darkness exulting at his coming. At the very moment when he shines in all the glory of earthly splendour - the arrow of death may be coming on the gale and wrath of an angry God just bursting over his guilt head to consume him forever. *The Lord seeth not as man seeth.*

In conclusion of this subject I remark first that it teaches us how liable we are to be deceived in regard to one another's real characters!

The antipodes are not more opposite than many of our characters are as viewed by men and as viewed by God. To men we may seem the peculiar favourites of heaven and just ready to step into it while we are in reality ripe for endless destruction. And it is in the power of almost everyone if disposed to practice this deception upon his fellow man nay to practice it upon himself. This shows us that there is no certainty in our decisions concerning others. And although this should not lead us to conclude that there is no real honesty or religion in the world nor make us unreasonably sceptical in regard to men's characters yet it should teach us to be cautious in our judgment of the state of other hearts nor put ourselves in the power of another until he has given strong evidence that he deserves our confidence. It should teach us also to avoid all rashness and unreasonable censoriousness in our judgments of our brethren and wait long and pray much before we give them up as reprobate.

In the second place I remark that we are taught by the subject not to engage in any course of conduct which we are unwilling to have known to our fellow man. For that God to whom it will be infallibly known to be our final judge and his law is much more strict than any human law. If then we are ashamed to let our fellow man know what we are engaged in how much more ashamed ought we to be to have it all laid open to the inspection of Jehovah. If the low standard of human laws condemn us how can we abide the trial by that standard which a perfectly holy God has established. Prudence may indeed render it expedient in many cases to keep certain actions hid from men: but the Christian ought always so to conduct that an exhibition of his conduct will never raise the blush of shame upon his cheek.

Thirdly how full of alarm is this subject to hypocrites. How many cuts do they practice to conceal their wicked deeds from the world! But they cannot envelop themselves in a covering which omniscience will not penetrate. Wicked men most commonly choose the darkness of the night as an hour well fitted for their abominable deeds. But Oh could the veil that hangs between the world of matter and the world of Spirits be once drawn aside could they look up and see the eye of God turned full upon them could they

in the very act of wickedness see the glittering sword of almighty wrath just falling upon their heads how it would freeze their guilty souls and fill them with horrors unutterable! Yet it is true - let it be remembered by every ungodly man - it is solemnly true that God does stand just over their heads while they sin all ready to cut them asunder with the sword of his wrath. Think of this ye adulterers - think of this ye revelers - think of this ye slanderers - think of this all ye host of God's enemies!

Finally this subject contains much to comfort the honest and conscientious Christian. He may be suffering from the severe and uncharitable judgments of his fellow men. But if he can appeal to God for the rectitude of his intentions and motives he may say with Paul *it is a very small thing with me that I should be judged of man's judgment - he that judgeth me is the Lord*. And to the man who loves God it is a pleasant thought that his eye is always upon him. He feels as if his best friend were constantly with him with him he can have frequent communion. When temptations assail he realizes that God is looking on to see how he resists and the fear of offending him operates as a powerful check to restrain him from all sin and a powerful spur to the practice of holiness. The thought that God's eye is upon him is painful to the ungodly man and gives him uneasiness - but to the Christian it is consoling and animating and leads him to look forward to that state where he shall see that glorious Being without an intervening cloud and dwell eternally in his blissful presence.

Delivered

At Conway December 1823

## Sermon 202 Omnipresence of God

[Sermon No. 202, "Omnipresence of God," Jeremiah 23:24, 1823 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 4]

Jeremiah 23:24

*Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?  
saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?*

The practical manner in which the sacred writers present the most difficult and abstract truths of religion ought to be a warning to those of Christ who preach the Gospel always to make a personal application of the truths we prove and not rest on the mere proof to carry them to the hearts of our hearers. For it ought to be remembered that the understanding may yield its undoubting assent to a doctrine of religion while the heart maintains against it a more resolute and obstinate opposition. Thus in regard to the omnipresence of God which is the theme of this morning's discourse although every man acknowledges its truth unhesitatingly yet what multitudes there are who as to all practical purposes deny it and have no idea at all of the universal presence of God around them in their every day paths. The prophet therefore presents this attribute of Jehovah in connection with its proper application. *Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth saith the Lord?* There is something very impressive in this language. Ungodly men have a feeling as if God did not see any more than man their secret deeds of wickedness. The prophet wishes to put these feelings to flight and to chase away the delusions under which the wicked acted - and to send home some lesson of the omnipresence of God into hearts so deeply that it would cling to them and awe them when rushing to the commission of sin. He does not merely tell them that God is every where present but that he fills heaven and earth. Every place and every thing is thus represented as completely occupied with the Deity.

It is necessary however in many instances to treat religious subjects in an abstract manner. Especially is this the case with all that concerns the attributes of Jehovah. These attributes are strictly incomprehensible because they are infinite and therefore cannot properly be compared with that which is finite. They relate also to Spirit alone and therefore to material objects cannot illustrate them. On these accounts it is no easy matter to attain definite ideas concerning these attributes; definite ideas concerning these attributes; although definite ideas are very desirable since the character of God forms the groundwork of all religion: and *all people will walk every one in the name of his god*. Any one therefore who means to attain a correct view of the character of Jehovah must consent to submit to close and patient thought. If any one has imagined that the series of discourses and proposed to deliver on this subject would furnish a pleasant entertainment for an idle fancy or a slothful mind he will be much mistaken: or if any one supposes that such discourses can be made as interesting in regard to style or arrangement as most other subjects he too will be mistaken. Still I shall endeavour to present the subject in as practical a light as possible and the importance of it will I trust induce all reasonable hearers to submit to the labour of using their reason.

In treating of the Omnipresence of God I shall first attempt to show in what it consists: and

Secondly present the proof that it is an attribute of Jehovah.

First in what does the Omnipresence of God consist?

At first thought we may imagine ourselves to have distinct apprehensions of the attribute. But a little reflection will convince us that clouds and darkness rest upon it. God is a Spirit. But what is a Spirit. Certainly something very different from matter and destitute of the essential properties of matter. Now it is an essential property of matter that it occupies space: and therefore a spirit does not occupy space. But is it not a good definition of our ideas of the omnipresence of God to say that he actually occupies all space? But if a spirit occupy space then it possesses one of the essential properties of matter and of course is matter: for what possesses one of the essential properties of any substance must be of the same nature as that substance. If God then occupy space in the same sense that matter does he must be matter. To such a shocking conclusion are we driven if we suppose God literally to fill or occupy an infinite space.

When we speak of God therefore as occupying or filling infinite space we do not mean that it is literally so: for this as I have shown is to make God material and consequently limited since matter cannot be infinite. What then do we mean? For something must be meant. Here my hearers I feel the poverty of human language. Here I feel the need of freeing my soul and of having your souls free from matter and with Paul to ascend into the third heavens in order that we being disembodied spirits and holding converse with spirits may know something of the mode of their existence. And yet were this to be done were we to sit at the feet of the highest archangel and hear him describe the omnipresence of God and were able to clothe his ideas in human language still this world fall vastly below the reality since Gabriel himself is finite and God is infinite. How much more imperfect then must be all our attempts in this state of flesh and blood to do justice to this subject. Our language must be only the language of approximation and will be mixed with material associations.

In former days it was customary for the schoolmen to speculate much on this subject: and they were thus driven into ridiculous absurdities. One maintained that God was a point which although indivisible had the property of filling every part of the universe. Another said that God was the place or immense extent of all created beings. Another said that his essence was really in heaven but repletively as they termed it throughout the universe. But I would not lead you into these extravagant subtleties. I would represent the omnipresence of God to consist in his seeing all – in his influencing all - and in his directing all.

First a part of God's omnipresence consists in his seeing all.

Since we must make use of material objects to aid our conceptions let us suffer the Deity to be an immense eye fixed on the centre of the world which sees every thing on every side throughout the immensity of the universe. Suppose that eye to be ever open through eternity that is past and the eternity to come. Imagine its vision to be perfect to discern objects at an infinite distance as well as those near at hand to be able to penetrate with equal ease the most transparent medium and the densest and most opaque body be equally capable of discerning the motions of matter and the thoughts of spirit. That such an insight into the universe of matter and spirit is possessed by God must be granted by all who admit of his perfections: and when we have pondered it in our minds we may hope that we have some idea of the omnipresence of God.

Secondly - a part of God's omnipresence consists in his influencing all.

That God exerts an influence over the natural world will be denied by none. When we see the sun moon and planets rolling in ceaseless majesty and harmony over our heads who does not acknowledge that secret invisible hand that communicates and continues their motions? When the seasons *walk their splendid round* when the vegetable world unfolds its rich beauties in the bird the flower and the fruit - when we see the air the waters and the earth teeming with life when we witness the exquisite workmanship the delicate organization of the individuals of the vegetable animal and mineral kingdoms. When we see in them the ten thousand marks of contrivance and design who can doubt that in all this there is a constant almighty agency - a divine influence - which creates upholds directs and governs all? Do you say it is nothing but the laws of nature? But what are the laws of nature apart from the agency of God? Nay what are these laws but the will of God acting as it was acts in the same manner and directed to the same object?

*All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;  
That, changed through all, and yet in all the same,  
Great in the earth, as in the ethereal frame,  
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,  
Glowes in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,  
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,  
Spirals undivided, operates unspent.* [Source: *An Essay on Man*, Alexander Pope, 1733]

*Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee - He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.*

Nor is the influence of God to be the less acknowledged in those apparently more irregular and disordered operations of nature that bring misery and ruin in their train. When the lightning flash and the thunders roar it is the voice of God thundering marvelously in the heavens. When the earthquake opens its devouring jaws when the volcano pours forth its fiery deluges it is the arm of the Almighty that gives them their power. When the earth refuses to yield her increase it is because God hath *made the heavens as iron and the earth as brass*. When war pestilence and famine desolate the world it is the Lord who brings them upon the nations. *I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I therefore do all these things. Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?* When our lives are preserved and prosperity comes upon us it is through the influence of God. When they are destroyed it is the same influence that destroys them. *Thou preservest man and beast when thou openest thy hand they are filled with God: Thou hidest thy face they are troubled thou takest away their breath they die and return to their dust. Man's days are determined, the number of his months are with him, he has appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.*

God also influences alike universally the moral as well as the natural world. I am sensible that I now tread upon ground that is fertile in controversy and therefore I would tread with caution.

There are few however who will refuse to go with me a certain distance in this field. And when I say that God influences our knowledge that is he imparts knowledge to us all I trust will assent to it: *For with thee, says the Psalmist, is the fountain of life; in my light we see light.*



No one either in a Christian audience will I trust object to the position that God influences our hearts to religious duties. For *it is God who worketh within us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. And no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him.*

God also influences men in the commission of sin. This is a position at which many will be startled. Let me therefore be clearly understood.

*[Asterisk; the following sentence was added on an inserted slip of paper]*

I use the term to *influence* in this place not in its usual sense: and should gladly use another term if I could find any in the English language that is better. *[End of insert]*

I mean that God exerts such an influence as is not inconsistent with his perfections - not inconsistent with the freedom and moral agency of men: such an influence as does not physically compel man to sin - such an influence as leaves them perfectly voluntary and free in sinning - such an influence as does not lessen by one iota their guilt in sinning. (And if there is an inconsistency between the term influence and these exceptions I shall be willing cheerfully to abandon it.) When God exerts a positive agency upon men to lead them into sin if ever he does exert such an agency this all will allow is influencing men to sin. But when he takes away the restraints of his grace from men and leaves them or permits them to fall into sin - this I call influencing them to sin. And who can deny that if he believes the bible that such an influence has been exerted in innumerable instances? How often is God said to have hardened the hearts of Pharaoh - anisterd God declares *that for this very purpose he had raised him up that he might show forth his power in him! The Lord says Isaiah hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst in the midst of Egypt. Go, says God to the same prophet, Go - make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert (or turn) and be healed. If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing and the Lord have deceived that prophet.* Paul also represents that when men are left to embrace religious error it is through the influence of God. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie that they all might be damned out who believe not the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness.* If these passages do not imply some sort of divine influence upon sinners I know of no language that can. But do they therefore make God the efficient author of sin or of sinful volitions or lessen in the least the guilt of sin is? God forbid!

Thirdly a part of God's omnipresence consists in his directing all.

If he creates if worlds it is that he may manifest his glory and afford a residence for innumerable beings. When he creates these beings it is to form a living choir who may chant his praise and glory and also to communicate his own happiness to innumerable creatures. In all his dealings with these creatures everything is so directed that it may subserve the general good. Amid all the apparent disorder and misery of this world God has one fixed plan and one fixed object to the promotion of which everything conduces. *The wrath of man is made to praise him and the remainder of wrath he restrains.* Does God send wars and pestilence and famine? It is to punish men for their sins for their abuse of his goodness and to make it manifest that this is a fallen world lying under a penal curse. Does he bestow prosperity? He intends it shall lead us to repentance. Does he impart wisdom? It is to guard us against the snares that surround us and if we misimprove it to render his justice in our condemnation more manifest. Does he influence us to holiness? It is to prepare us for heaven. Does he send delusions upon us that we should believe a lie? It is to punish us for the abuse of the truth. Does he leave us to sin? Is to punish us

for former disobedience and to leave us to fill up the measure of our iniquity. In short every thing that happens to us is directed or over ruled by an omnipresent God so as to produce some desirable end - so is ultimately to promote his glory in the good of the universe.

Gods Omnipresence then consists in his seeing all of things in his influencing all things in his directing all things. I proceed secondly to exhibit the evidence that God possesses this attribute.

And I ask any considerate person to look up about him to examine every object in every animal within his inspection and is there one of them that could exist a moment in its present form without the constant agency of God? Go to the heavens above and point me if you can to a spot where the marks of an ever present God are not visible descend to the earth or the depths below and find a place where the agency of God is not seen and you have indeed proved that he is not omnipresent. But his agency his constant agency are seen every where: and the Being who can occupy at the same moment every point in this vast material universe must be omnipresent.

To stamp the seal of certainty on such a conclusion we may open the scriptures and the text meets our eye. Turn also to the 139th Psalm and read the inspired writers beautiful and practical description of Jehovah's omnipresence. *Oh Lord thou hast searched me and known me – Thou compasseth my path and my lying down – Thou hast beset me behind and before and laid thine hand upon me. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I make my bed in hell behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

The first inference I shall make from this subject I shall present to you in the words of the eloquent and able Saurin (New indust Remarks Vol. 1.2.160)

In the second place let every sinner remember that God is an eyewitness of all his iniquities.

What a check it would exert upon an irreligious man were he to know that an eminent Christian had the power of following him into every place and heard every one of his words and saw every one of his actions! It would render him continually uneasy and palsy his hand when about to commit sin. But how much more ought it to restrain him from sin and make his soul tremble to realize that the high and holy God who hates sin and has shown by himself that he will by no means clear the guilty - the God who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell - to realize that this being is as really present with the sinner at every moment of his life as it is possible for one person to be with another - that this God sees every one of his actions hears his words and knows his thoughts – and is actually writing them all down in his remembrance. Did irreligious men realize that God's eye is fixed upon them from the cradle to the grave and is never turned from them a single moment they would not they could not sin as they now do. But this leads me to remark.

Thirdly that vast multitudes of men in Christian lands do not really believe that God is omnipresent. None indeed will deny this in so many words: but irreligious men show in their whole conduct that in practice they fully deny the doctrine. They would blush and be overwhelmed with shame to have all their thoughts words and actions made known to their dearest friends on earth. But God sees them when they lie down at night and rise in the morning without prayer. God sees them when they cheat and defraud their neighbour - when they neglect their bibles - when they profane his sabbaths. He sees

all their musings in their hearts against his government. He sees all their lewd and petty thoughts all their selfish desires all their feelings of hatred towards others all there secret prejudices against their neighbours and against religion. He sees them resisting his Spirit: breaching his laws and neglecting his Son. He sees them when sinning beneath the cover of the darkness or in the shades of solitude. Yet sinners rarely if ever think of this - and this is demonstrative proof that they do not really believe that God's eye is always upon them. If they did believe it their knees would smite together like those of Belshazzar and they would be in the very horrors of hell till they had repented and submitted to God.

Finally let the children of God remember that God is always present with them.

How powerfully ought this consideration to awaken the Christian to vigilance in watching over his words his actions his thoughts and desires! What a powerful stimulus to the performance of his duty! An omnipotent God stands by you at all times Christian and fills your very soul every moment with his presence. In times of sorrow and affliction he is there - when you are in the midst of the enemies of religion he is there - in seasons of temptation he is there where one self-confidence - self-flattery and self-righteousness swell you with pride he is there to humble you - when your soul is in darkness he is there ready to hear your prayers - when you lie upon the bed of sickness he is there beholding and pitying you in your distresses: and when death at last comes with all its horrors he will be present to sustain you through the last conflict in hereafter he will be present with you and you will be present with him through all eternity.

Delivered

At Conway December 1823

## Sermon 203 Omnipotence of God

[Sermon No. 203, "Omnipotence of God," Jeremiah 32:17, 1824 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 4]

Jeremiah 32:17

*Ah, Lord God! Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by  
thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.*

*[Discussion of the stars and planets, life on earth, other worlds.]*

In these words is implied one of the grandest attributes of Jehovah - his omnipotence or almighty power and to a consideration of it I now invite your attention.

The proof that God is almighty results from the unquestionable fact that he created and upholds the universe. This is the grand argument which I now propose to unfold.

I have indeed have no apprehension that the omnipotence of Jehovah is denied or even doubted by any who knowledge his existence. Nor can any doctrine be more clearly expressed in scripture than this. God expressly declares when addressing Abraham, *I am the Almighty God*. David speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost says, *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honours come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.* John also heard the hosts of heaven *as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings saying Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*

But the very abundance and clearness of the proof of God's omnipotence contained in scriptures and the fact that no one denies it may induce us to disregard those rational arguments which also establish the doctrine. And the forgetfulness of this may lead us into errors concerning other points of theology since there is among all the truths of religion or seen or unseen connection and an ignorance of one will of course affect our apprehensions of others.

In order to be impressed with the omnipotence or almighty power of God then my hearers turn your eyes first upon the material universe.

We often admire the wisdom and the power of men whose lives have been devoted to the investigation of science. But no man has ever yet been able - no man has ever approached to the ability to create even a shapeless atom. Let chemistry and electricity put forth their mightiest efforts and summon to their aid the whole circle of sciences - and they may modify - decompose and even recombine substances: but here is their limit and creative power seems to be the incommunicable prerogative of Jehovah.

To the power that can create this smallest portion of matter we can set no limits. For as this is

altogether beyond human effort we cannot tell but it infinitely exceeds it. Indeed we can form no idea of the process of creation. It is the most stupendous of all miracles. It is a stretch of power perfectly incomprehensible to our faith faculties - and therefore we are unable to set bounds to it.

But this idea of creation will require new force when we contemplate the vast variety and magnitude of its parts. The most careless observer cannot but be struck with the immense number and gradations of the animal vegetable and mineral kingdoms. There exist on this earth not less than 30,000 different species of animals and 100,000 different species of plants. And in many instances the individuals that are found in a particular species of animal are much more numerous than the whole number of human beings on earth that is more than six hundred millions. And in most species of plants the number of individuals is far more numerous than this. What an astonishing effort of power must it demand to create these countless millions. Yet the greater proportion of these animals and plants yearly or at short intervals perish and are succeeded by new ones which seem to the eye of scepticism to spring up spontaneously without any cause but which seem to the eye of reason and faith to be the result of the creating energy of the Almighty.

Look next at the greater part of the creation. This earth is a solid mass more than 3000 miles through it: yet it is incessantly in motion at the rate of more than a thousand miles every minute. To create and put in motion such an immense globe strikes us as demanding a most stupendous exertion of power. But look beyond this earth and you will see other worlds scattered through the immensity. The planet Jupiter is 1500 times larger than the earth yet all the time in rapid motion: and the sun is more than a million times larger than this world. The fixed stars which light up the canopy of heaven with their innumerable nightly splendours are but so many suns scattered through the immensity of space at an inconceivable distance from us and from one another and around each of them there can be little doubt revolve planets peopled and swarming with life like our world. The largest telescopes announce to us that there are not less than 75 millions of these fixed stars in the whole heavens and if each of them have as many attendant planets as the sun that enlightens us - the whole numbers of worlds and the universe so far as our glasses can reach are not less than 2000 millions! And these upon an average are probably as large as our earth! Now my hearers what a lofty thought it is to conceive of Jehovah commanding with a word this immense number of worlds out of nothing and giving them all the most rapid harmonious motions and so array and balancing them that none interfere or break in upon the place and order of the whole! If this does not demand almighty power we can conceive of nothing that does.

But before quitting this part of the subject permit me to conduct your imaginations once more over this boundless field. Fix your eye first upon a single animal - say man. In each individual man are more than a million of parts. These must have all been originally created and arranged in a particular order by God - and confining our thoughts to an individual this must seem a wonderful exhibition of creative energy. But carry your thoughts abroad and let them take in the innumerable millions of plants and animals and minerals on the globe and remember that in each of these are not much less than a million of parts. How does the idea of the power necessary to create all these expand within us when we attempt to turn our thoughts upon the countless millions of the globe! But go still farther - leave this globe and proceed to another: and there you will doubtless find an equal number of living beings - pause a moment to contemplate the additional exertion of creative energy necessary to bring these additional millions into existence. Advance next to a third world and enter into a like examination and proceed onward in this survey until you have reached the last of the 2000 millions of worlds that roll through the boundless fields of space - and when you have finished this vast examination pause and recollect that you have probably only entered the threshold of creation - that you have proceeded only so far as the imperfect

glasses of mortals can reach and that in the immeasurable void beyond there may roll millions of other suns giving life to thousands of millions of other worlds, pause here and tell me whether you are not overwhelmed with a sense of the Almighty creative power of Jehovah!

We have yet examined only the variety and magnitude of creation. Let us now select one or two circumstances connected with this work. Were the creation but one uniform unmovable mass of dead matter it would not excite within us so vivid an impression of power as to see it teeming with life. The principle of life - what is it? What is vegetable life? And what is animal life? These questions have long been asked and remain among the inscrutable subjects which probably can be fully unfolded only in another world. Yet life is a principle which exists and operates almost every where and gives beauty and glory to the works of creation. Creation might have indeed existed without it but it would have been useless unseen and unenjoyed by any but God. To communicate life to matter was accordingly a higher exercise of creative energy than the production of matter out of nothing. It was a communication of that which constitutes an essential property of God himself who is emphatically styled *the living God and the living Father*.

But the creation of the immaterial universe that is the world of Spirits exalts still higher our apprehension of the power of God. Matter is destined to perish. It is only the convenient receptacle in which the souls of men are lodged and in this world it exerts a clogging and paralyzing influence upon the soul. It is mind that gives all the worth and dignity to matter. It is this that can alone know and love and enjoy the Creator. This is destined to survive the wreck of the material universe and to bloom in new splendours and flourish in new vigour when the heavens and the earth shall be burned up. It will live forever and by the side of God be forever advancing towards perfection. The creator of the soul then is the most glorious display of creative energy that God has made. It is the link that invites matter to the throne of God - and gives to it all its worth. Suns and worlds were created to subserve the wants of minds and nourish them for immortality.

Now with these Vast ideas in the mind of the variety extent and grandeur of the works of God turn to the first chapter of Genesis and read the account of creation. We are here presented with a most striking display of the energy of omnipotence. No engines of slow progress are described as gradually bringing the work to pass. The fiat of Jehovah is all the engine all the instrument employed. *And God said let there be light and there was light*. Who does not see in the ease with which this universe was produced that the whole of omnipotence was not exerted in its creation! And yet to that power which could bring this immense system of things out of nothing we can assign no limits - and therefore it must be infinite - that is we have all the proof which the human mind is capable of receiving that it is infinite. Well may we say with the Psalmist, *Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast*.

But God did not merely bring all things into existence. He upholds them all and directs them all. His arm continues without a moments cessation to turn round the wheels of nature. It is his energy that gives life in motion and direction to everything. Let the atheist talk of the laws of nature as much as he will: the laws of nature are nothing without the energy of God - nay we believe they are the energy of God and nothing more. And who can conceive of the vastness of that power which at the same moment invigorates and upholds all the worlds and all the vegetables and animals that fill immensity from the highest archangel around his throne to the microscopic insect - from the vast suns in the centre of their respective systems to the merest atom that floats unseen by mortal eye on the breeze. Tell me if this be not a work demanding omnipotence and worthy omnipotence?

My object in dwelling so long upon the almighty power of God is rather to illustrate that attribute than to multiply arguments on a point so universally acknowledged and yet so full of grandeur. I close with a few inferences and remarks.

In the first place by reflecting upon the omnipotence of God in connection with his other unchanging attributes we shall be convinced that he is absolutely independant. I infer from the subject this morning discussed taken in connection with those presented on preceding sabbaths concerning God's character that he is absolutely independant. By this I understand that he is dependant upon nothing for his existence his attributes or his happiness. That God is underived has been shown in a form of discourse and of course his attributes are underived since these and these alone constitute God. He is independant as to his knowledge. He does not receive his ideas from without as intelligent created beings do. *Who hath directed the Spirit of the world, says the prophet, or being his counsellor have taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?* He is independant in his power. His strength is derived from no one and he exerts it as he pleases without consulting anyone. He is independant in his goodness, *having mercy on whom he will have mercy and hardening whom he will.* And as his happiness is derived from himself alone it cannot be affected by any thing that takes place without him. He does indeed take pleasure in communicating happiness to his creatures: but his happiness cannot properly be said to be thus increased since this would imply that it was not perfect before. *Can a man be profitable unto God as he that is wise maybe profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?*

Secondly if God be independant then all created beings are necessarily dependant. To suppose them to possess a single attribute by which they are independant raises them to an equality with God. For whatever being possesses one of the attributes of God possesses the whole of them. Since it is impossible to conceive of the existence of one of his attributes by itself without the others - or to suppose one of them united with created characteristics. Let us then remember that there is always an infinite distance between created intelligence however exalted and the uncreated Jehovah. Let us realize that he is the spring whence proceeds all that we have and all that we are and remember that we have nothing which we did not receive from him and for which we are not dependant on him and therefore nothing of which we ought to be proud.

And if so then thirdly I remark that the attributes of God cannot be conferred upon or delegated to a creature. If this were done such a creature would necessarily become equal to God or God himself since he is endowed with his attributes and attributes of God constitute his character. Unless God therefore multiply himself he cannot impart his omniscience omnipotence eternity independance justice goodness mercy and the like to a creature.

In the fourth place I infer from the subject that Christ is really and truly the supreme God. The whole proof that God is omnipotent (with the exception of the testimony of the Scriptures) is founded on the fact that he created and upholds the universe. That proof is perfectly satisfactory - so that I believe no one who believed the existence of God ever hesitated to receive it as demonstrative. But listen my hearers while I read to you certain passages of the bible concerning Christ - *All things, says John, all things were made by him: and without him was not anything made that was made. By him, says Paul, were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth visible and invisible whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers all things were created by him and for him and he is before all things and by him all things consist.* No words can possibly impute more clearly to Christ the

creation and preservation of all things in heaven above and in the earth beneath. And if the fact that God created all things proves him to be omnipotent the same fact proves Christ to be omnipotent and we have just said that it is absurdity to suppose a creature can possess any of the divine attributes and that none of these attributes can be delegated to a creature without making him God. Setting prejudice aside the conclusion then seems irresistible that Christ must be the Supreme God. To say that the fact of Christ's creating all things does not prove him to be omnipotent is to say that the fact of God's creating all things does not prove him to be omnipotent and since there is no other proof of this to be found we are driven to the alternative either to acknowledge Christ to be omnipotent or to say that it is not possible for natural theology to prove God to be omnipotent.

Fifthly in what an appalling aspect to the impenitent sinner does the omnipotence of God present him?

We behold some faint traces of that omnipotence in those violent convulsions and disturbances of nature that carry consternation and death in their train. When the wind and the tempest the thunder and the lightning rend asunder with irresistible fury the works the habitations and the bodies of men when the earthquake opens its devouring jaws when the volcano belches forth its desolating torrents of fire - then we see a few faint traces of omnipotence. But all is mercy - all this is weakness compared to those terrors the Almighty God will bring upon the finally impenitent. With a perfect knowledge of sin and sinners God has threatened to put forth the irresistible energies of omnipotence for their punishment. Now he is represented as a raging bear robbed of his whelps - now he pours on the heads of the wicked a torrent of fire blowing it with his own breath to a tenfold heat. Now he stands with his drawn and glittering sword his countenance flashing vengeance and his arm already directing and urging on the dreadful blow. And now he stands with the bow of his wrath bent and the arrow on the string pointing at the sinner's heart. All these terrific representations and many more are given in the holy scriptures. And let it be remembered that the being who is thus exhibited in every aspect of terror is omnipotent. Let it be remembered that his vengeance will fall upon every one who does not repent. Careless sinner - you who smile at this representation - that omnipotence will one day fall in all its threatened fury upon your miserable soul except you repent.

Finally what an impenetrable shield is the omnipotence of God spread over the righteous.

Their deadliest enemies though they consist of sin death and hell cannot maintain a moment's contest with that Being who at a word brought into existence this vast creation. And in the covenant of grace that God has sworn that he will effect their deliverance. They may cheerfully then press forward in the conflict towards the mark, etc. The triumph is assuredly theirs - the shame is to their enemies. And when the day of their deliverance comes the same voice that spoke the universe into being will command ten thousand joys to flow in upon their souls in one eternal and forever increasing stream.

Delivered

At Conway January 1824

At Amherst West Parish December 7 1828

At School Meadows March 1829

At Amherst College December 1832



## Sermon 206 Blessings of Redemption

[Sermon No. 206, "Blessings of Redemption," Luke 2:10-11, 1824 Oct,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 5]

Luke 2:10-11

*Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.  
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.*

It is a pleasant task to every heart not utterly dead to generous emotion to convey intelligence to those in sorrow and difficulty of a favourable change in the circumstances or some mode by which they may be delivered from their trials. If you believed if you felt the truth of the tidings I brought to your ears this morning they must have left your heart heavy and sorrowful. For the picture I drew of human nature although derived from the word of God and confirmed by experience was nevertheless a most gloomy one: and if you did not sigh over it it was because your hearts were under the influence of that fatal apathy and deadness of spiritual things which constitutes the essence of native depravity. If you do not weep over the picture prophets apostles and even the Son of God have often wept over it. But I will indulge the idea that you did feel the sadness of the tidings I brought and that you sighed over miserable degraded human nature and exclaimed *who then can be saved?* To the heart thus dejected and oppressed I come this afternoon with good tidings of great joy. A Saviour was born *whom the Lord hath anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent him to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to them that were bound. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.* The appearance of that Saviour puts an entirely new aspect upon the wretched world. An angel from heaven communicated the joyful intelligence to the shepherds watching their flocks by night and it is no marvel that *suddenly there was with the angel so much multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.* Alas that so few of men have echoed back to heavenly song!

From the words of the text I have already on a former occasion addressed this audience: but the subject it embraces was by no means exhausted. Oh, the wonders of redeeming love have a height and depth and length and breadth that passeth knowledge not merely the knowledge of man but of angels. How to rescue a revolted world from ruin was a problem which no created wisdom could solve and the plan by which it was effected is expressively styled in scripture *the wisdom of God*. From the cross of Christ the rays of wisdom and love beam in glorious splendour upon the world and lighten up a path even through the dark valley of the shadow of death into the realms of immortality.

*Yet the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.* Those who will not believe the scriptural representation of man's entire depravity in consequence of the original apostasy of Adam can discern no form nor correctness in Christ crucified. The depravity of man says the philosopher all proceeds from his following bad examples and not from any inherent sinful propensities we bring into the world with us. For to suppose that we are born with corrupt natures is to make God the author of sin. If then sin results from evil examples and men by nature are as much inclined to goodness as to sin it needs only the strenuous exertions of pure examples of the wise and good to bring back man to the original standard of purity from which they have wandered.

On such a false principle as this has many a philosophic statesman pursued his utopian scheme of reforming the world. And though they have universally failed by such principles of working a radical reformation from sin and holiness - from selfishness and benevolence - upon a single individual they have almost universally imputed their failure to some peculiarly unfavourable circumstances and not to the falsehood of the principle which constituted the groundwork of the whole system - that men are not by nature corrupt. And as if a blind infatuation had seized man multitudes of the professedly wise still continue to act upon this false system as if it had ever been found true and effectual when there is not an instance on record in which it has not utterly failed of the intended effect. Now how can man with such a belief feel the force of *the good tidings of great joy* which the angel proclaimed? If men by education and human cultivation may become holy here and fit for heaven hereafter of what use is Christ crucified? He may indeed be welcomed as a kind visitor from another world sent down to enlighten our race and set before them a spotless example but it is only the heart that feels itself to be by nature dead in trespasses and sins and exposed to everlasting perdition that can respond from overflowing feelings to the angels tidings and realize that Christ is his alpha and omega - the only hope of his soul - his all and in all.

It is to such hearts thoroughly taught from their own experience their inbred wickedness and desperate condition - to seek and reiterate the joyful intelligence that a Saviour is born who is Christ the Lord. How deep and dark soever the prison in which they are bound the love of the Saviour can reach them for it is stronger than death - how strong soever be the chains that hold them down the arm of that Saviour has strength enough in it to rend them asunder. Unbending as is the penalty of God's law which threatens them its power is broken by falling on the head of this Redeemer. Fearful as seemed to you the yawning pit where blackness of darkness reigns forever and ever the Saviour can close its gates for has the keys of death and hell. Mountain high though your sins have risen the blood of Christ has risen higher.

*Rivers of care and mercy here*

*In a rich ocean join*

*Salvation in abundance flows*

*Like floods of milk and wine. [Source: Hymn by Isaac Watts, 18<sup>th</sup> century]*

I fancy I hear some one enquiring how it were possible all this could be effected - who could produce a reconciliation between God and man? Who had strength enough to bear the curse of a broken law? Did you not in the morning represent every individual of the human race as having broken the law of God whose penalty was everlasting perdition? Did you not show that it was utterly impossible God should remit the penalty of his law and that therefore we it must be executed. Did you not show that for God to yield the point and let the criminal go unpunished would render his moral character contemptible in the sight of holy beings? Did you not moreover show that the hearts of men are by nature utterly opposed to God and to every method of reconciliation that could be proposed which would oblige them to yield their hearts to him? The wisdom and power of God can indeed effect everything except impossibilities - and if here are not impossibilities where are they to be found?

The work of man's redemption my hearers is indeed as already remarked far beyond the reach of created wisdom to devise and execute. And it forms the brightest display of the divine wisdom ever made known to mortals. Yet the method he employed to bring about the reconciliation of a revolted world - to remove the barrier that obstructed the work on his own part and that also on the part of man although full of sublimity was yet a wonderfully simple plan. It consisted in making his only begotten Son a substitute for sinners and *in laying on him the iniquity of us all*. He did not indeed as we have reason to believe suffer the full amount which sinners would otherwise suffer in hell but he died and suffered as

answered precisely the same purpose in the sight of the universe. He suffered enough (human capacities cannot tell how much it was) he suffered enough to manifest most strikingly to the universe the divine displeasure against sin. He suffered so much that provided the sinner believed on him precisely the same effect would be produced on the universe as if the sinner had suffered the eternal torments of hell. It is obvious that if any substitute could be found who could accomplish all this great difficulty on the part of God that prevented the sinner's return would be taken out of the way. For God is infinitely merciful and gracious when it becomes consistent with his declarations to the universe to pardon sin he will not withhold that pardon one moment on account of the gross insult that has been offered himself. And we are sure that the Son of God as the substitute of sinners did bear the curse of the law in his own body on the tree and thus make it just for God to justify the believer in Jesus.

But do you still ask all the difficulty on man's part shall be removed. For with such a heart as he has by nature – at enmity with God - how will he be made to love God although pardon be proffered to him. Will he not spurn it away from him as degrading him too much - as taking all the glory out of his hands and reducing him to the state of absolute dependance? Yes, my hearers - he will look upon the cross of Christ as foolishness and persist in his rebellion until some other power be made to bear upon him. Yet the plan of redemption Christ has carried into effect provides for this dilemma. He has sent down the eternal Spirit to enter the heart of rebels - to convince of sin of righteousness and judgment to come and to point the eye of the sinner to his cross. And when this attention is thus directed to a bleeding Saviour there is a magic in the sight that charms away the enmity and obstinacy of the human heart. Its pride and self-sufficiency and hostility to God melt down into submission and tenderness and peace at the picture of love which Christ crucified exhibits. It is not by the terrors of the divine law that the impregnable guarded citadel of man's affections is to be taken but when we see that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to die for it - what! Love the world while they were yet enemies! And make so immense a sacrifice too while they were enemies - oh here is the charm that at such at once disarms the obstinate rebel and his soul yields itself willing captive to the power of redeeming love.

Man have sometimes found a difficulty in seeing why it is if Christ was actually a substitute for sinners and actually suffered in their stead why it is that all will not be saved whether they believe in him or not. But on this view of the subject all these difficulties vanish. Suppose it be granted that they will all be raised to heaven. Yet if they have not believed on Christ if their hearts have not been renewed by the Spirit of God - they could not be more in hell than in the company of angels and of Jehovah. For the mind is its own place and in itself can make a hell of heaven or heaven of hell. Such a mind - retaining its original enmity to God - carries hell within it and cannot escape from it any more than from itself. Every one of us must therefore believe on the Lord Jesus Christ while here on earth or we cannot be happy in heaven because without this faith we can have no relish for the joys of heaven. It is absolutely impossible then for any unrenewed sinner to enter heaven because hell encircles him wherever he goes.

I have dwelt so long on the manner in which Christ is accomplished the redemption of man that but little space remains to notice the particular blessings he has procured for those who believe in him. The great fact that a consistent way is thus opened for reconciliation of sinners to the favour of God does not indeed imply many most precious blessings - opening more and more to the believer as he meditates upon them and experiences them and which will continue to be more and more developed throughout eternity. One prominent item in the good tidings of great joy I bring is that it removes the believer from his exposure to the wrath of God. It bids him look to the cross of Christ and see the curse of the law he has broken falling on the head of a substitute. And the value of this deliverance can be justly appreciated only by him who has been made to realize in a just light the fearful punishment his sins deserve and the equally tremendous retribution God has threatened. There is a serenity in those

threatening which is calculated – let the careless sinner scoff at them as he may – to weigh down and overwhelm the stoutest heart. The idea of deliverance therefore must possess a correspondent joy. It is not a deliverance from temporal suffering: but from the worm that never dies and from the fire that never is quenched - not of deliverance from the vengeance of a created being *but from the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

Another no less joyful part of these good tidings is that through the suffering of Christ this ransomed sinner has a title given him to an inheritance incorruptible undefiled and that fadeth not away laid up in heaven in reversions. It would be delightful intelligence to man oppressed by an ironhanded poverty to announce to him that a princely fortune was bequeathed to him. Nay such tidings have often proved too powerful an excitement for the human system to support and joy has risen to a fixed delirium. But away with the riches of earth when we speak of the riches of heaven - for they cannot be compared. His holiness – 'tis happiness unalloyed that constitutes the heavenly inheritance – 'tis such as angels possess - its true value can never be learnt till eternity be terminated: for it is eternal - once obtained it can never be lost - once gained it will be forever increasing. To comprehend it all in one rich sentence, *it is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.*

These are the two grand items of the good tidings of great joy which I communicate. But I come to announce also that a victory is attained over death and the grave. These hitherto invincible foes to our race whose iron sceptre has waxed for so many thousands of years over the heads of prostrate millions have been met resisted and subdued. The Saviour has travelled in the greatness of his strength and grappling with the king of Terrors – though seeming to yield for a moment - he has risen triumphant from the struggle bearing the dart of the vanquished. Death indeed still continues to exercise his power over men - but to the believer his sting is taken away. Clad in the same armor as their master and having their weakness made perfect in his strength saints may now be sure of the victory. And many with their latest breath have shouted the conqueror's song, *O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory! Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I announce also as good tidings that Christ has become a friend of the friendless. When on earth he knew what it was to be persecuted and abandoned by all his friends and to wander a wretched outcast from society. And if any of you my hearers feel yourselves to be alone on earth and have no congenial bosom into which to pour your complaints and feel the world's neglect and scorn be assured that you have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities but one who in all respects was tempted like as we are one whose heart deeply feels for the friendless and is ready to sympathize for all your trials if he only witnessed in you the tear of genuine repentance.

I announce too to all the miserable that a Saviour has come to be their support and comforter. His kind invitation is *come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.* A bruised reed will he not brake and the smoking flame will he not quench until he send forth judgment unto victory. Are you miserable on account of your sins? Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Are you miserable on account of ungrateful children unkind relatives – quarrelsome neighbors - on account of bereavement - disappointed hopes and blasted expectations. It is such that Christ invites to take shelter in his arms. Are you miserable on account of ungovernable passions and inordinate desires? Here is the physician can cure all the maladies of the soul.

Once more I proclaim to the widow and the fatherless an almighty and everlasting friend. Christ knows your every want - he witnesses all your tears and hears every sign you heave and every prayer you offer. He is ready to lead you in safety along the wilderness you tread to guard you from the dangers that

beset your path and to bring you to a world of light and joy at last. And he asks in return only the sincere affections of your hearts.

Finally were the sick and the dying within the sound of my voice I would point them to a supporter and comforter. I would bid them look to Jesus the conqueror of death and put on the *breast plate of righteousness the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and they would be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*. I would beseech them to listen to those heart cheering words - *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*. I would press on them the truth that Christ is present watching their sick beds and can make a dying bed feel soft as downy pillows are.

But after all it is to the soul oppressed with a sense of its sinfulness and danger that I would say most emphatically, *Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy for unto you is born ~~this day~~ in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord*. He and he alone can remove the burthen of your guilt and take away the agony of unforgiven sin. He can say *thy sins be forgiven thee* and your chains will burst asunder and you will go forth into the liberty of the Gospel. The peace of God which passeth understanding will dwell within you in the place of the wearisomeness and anguish you now experience.

But in this season of stupidity do I not look around this audience in vain to find one heart that is so weighed down with a sense of its sinfulness that the news of a Saviour is sweet? On the contrary do not all my impenitent hearers reply that I have presented no news at this time but merely the same hackneyed description of what no heart can be ignorant? True indeed I have presented nothing before you today but the leading peculiarities of the Gospel. Yet to the heart that has felt their power however often repeated they are good tidings of great joy. And if the impenitent turn a heedless ear to the intelligence I have brought there are hearts in this assembly - Christian hearts - renewed by the Spirit of God - which having once felt the power of the Gospel can never hear of what their Saviour has done without hearing good tidings of great joy. It is a subject that cannot grow old: and a fresh interest will be thrown around it throughout their joyous eternity. While they in heaven are eternally rejoicing in the wonders of redeeming love you my hearers who live and die impenitent will be cursing the day of your birth in the world of woe. While they are rejoicing in recollection of the day when their burdened hearts cast themselves upon the Saviour you will be mourning that *the harvest is past the summer ended and you are not saved*. For *thus saith the Lord God, behold my servants shall eat but ye shall be hungry: behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed. Behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart and shall howl for vexation of Spirit*.

Delivered

At Conway 10th of October 1824

At Amherst College October 1834

At Amherst West Parish September 1835

## Sermon 207 Sovereignty of God Part I

[Sermon No. 207, "Sovereignty of God, Part I" Daniel 4:35 , 1824 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 5]

Daniel 4:35

*He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

*[While Hitchcock was writing this sermon his first child died. Hitchcock discusses the death and says it was because of their sins (paragraph 10). He also comments on slavery (paragraph 17).]*

Though most men are ready to confess that the agency of God is concerned in every event yet most of us are practical unbelievers in the doctrine. While we acknowledge as an abstract principle that that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered - that the way of man is not in himself but of the Lord - we still are apt to feel as if events were the result of mere chance and it is only when something very remarkable occurs that we think of the hand of God or suspect this regulates and controls every event. But it is a fundamental principle of natural and revealed religion that all things take place in accordance with the purpose or will of God. However strange and mysterious the events we witness - however seemingly without order or design may be their occurrence - nay however apparently contrary they may look to us we are assured that they all constitute a part of the original designs of Jehovah and that his fiat fixes them just as they are and that they are and that they could not be otherwise without deranging the whole system of God's government and bring additional misery upon the universe.

In this ordering and disposing all events God acts as a sovereign. And it is that attribute or property of his nature denominated his sovereignty which I propose to make the theme of the present discourse. I will know that from some almost unaccountable cause the very phrase sovereignty of God is apt to excite in the heart of multitudes unpleasant sensations. It is true it is a subject that may be pushed beyond the inspired record and in exploring its heights and depths many a man who strangely stumbled and returning from his exertions presented us with a distorted view of it: yet it is also true that if we limit ourselves strictly to the scripture representation of this subject is impossible to render it a subject palatable to many. In entering upon such a subject therefore I cannot hope to instruct or convince unless my hearers will endeavor to divest themselves of all prepossessions against this doctrine and feel an earnest and honest desire to understand and embrace the truth concerning it. It is also important that I attempt a definition of what the sovereignty of God is: since if we are not agreed in the definition we certainly shall not be in the conclusion. I shall therefore

In the first place attempt to define what the sovereignty of God consists

And secondly address the proofs that God exercises his sovereignty.

By the sovereignty of God then in the first place I do not mean that he is arbitrary capricious or unreasonable. Very many however are apt to suppose that the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty means the

same thing when applied to God as the word tyrant does when applied to man. But it is a presumptuous impeachment of the Divine Being to suppose he has not in all instances the very best reasons for his conduct. He may not reveal those reasons to us or to any created beings - no creative being perhaps is capable of understanding them fully. But still there may be the very best grounds for every one of his divine proceedings. Although *clouds and darkness may be round about him, still justice and judgment may be the habitation of his throne.*

Men may be capricious arbitrary and unreasonable: but a being that is perfectly holy is incapable of such conduct. Much less then can it be supposed in that Being who is not only perfect in holiness but in every other respect. When speaking of his sovereignty we do indeed mean that he acts independantly and that he does not in all cases communicate his reasons to his creatures for his conduct. Still we do not mean that he acts contrary to reason or is actuated by human passions.

And here let me enquire whether we can expect to understand the grounds of the divine conduct except in the very few instances and in a very few limited degree? You are a wise and learned man: you would not find it possible to make a very ignorant man understand all the reasons by which you are actuated in the pursuit of science. If you stated them to him he could not feel their force because he could not comprehend them. But consider the infinitely wider differences between the wisest of men and the eternal God and how can you expect to see through his plans or comprehend the grounds of his conduct even if revealed - much less if left to the glimmerings of reason to discover them. God has indeed thought fit to furnish us with the reasons of his conduct in some instances and these we can understand. But in a variety of other cases we must be content to receive the simple fact without aspiring for the explanation. We must receive it on the best of all authority - that of the God who cannot lie.

*Nor Gabriel asks the reason why,  
Nor God the reason gives;  
Nor dares the favourite angel pry  
Between the folded leaves.*

*[Source: Poem by Isaac Watts, 1816]*

But if we do not mean by the sovereignty of God that he acts capriciously and unreasonably what positively do we mean? We mean that he has a right to act and does act independantly and irresistibly according to his will or pleasure without assigning to his creatures the reasons of his conduct. The text expresses all this *He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou.* It is the language of a man who had been taught the most striking lesson and was himself a striking instance of the sovereignty of God. It was a part of the thanksgiving tribute of that Nebuchadnezzar who for seven years had been made to descend from the throne of glorious majesty to dwell with wild beasts. How very different is his language now from that which issued from him when seven years before bloated with pride he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon and said *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?* But the special act of God taught him most deeply his own insignificance and the absolute sovereignty of God. And it has been the case in all ages that those have had the deepest and most correct views of that sovereignty who have been most severely tried in the school of adversity. While men are at ease in their possessions and have felt few painful reversals their hearts are almost universally unwilling to believe that an unseen irresistible power is controlling their destinies and that he will bless them or not according to his own will and pleasure. But let that unseen power put forth a few manifestations of its operations - let it strip away the honors or pleasures of possessions or any thing else that is dear and the pride of the heart begins to submit its resolute caviling spirit vanishes and the man sinks down at the foot of sovereign

mercy believing feeling and repenting that *it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps* and that *God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth*. Others may doubt and murmur at this but he has felt it his own bitter experience has made him see that he could not resist the will of God. And that he could not in all cases discover the reasons of the Divine conduct.

*[Two paragraphs are crossed out.]*

Thus far had I proceeded my hearers in the composition of this discourse when I was called away to witness in the protracted agonies and final removal of an only child a painful exhibition of the sovereign dominion of Jehovah. That children should be called out of the world before they are capable of knowing good and evil might in itself considered be regarded as a mere expression of mercy in God who thus saved them from the dangers of a wicked world and early transplanted them into his Paradise above. But when we see that death preceded by an agonizing struggle between disease and nature it casts a mystery over the subject and leaves the mind at once to resolve it all into the holy sovereignty of God. We see something of darkness in it - something that our actual researches cannot fathom. And if we refer to revelation for light we are only told that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, because all have sinned...even upon those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*. Yet the scriptures assure us that *the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father*: and we know that children before arriving at years of moral discernment are not capable of personal and actual sin. Although therefore the bible informs us that sin is the cause of the death of the tender child as well as the aged man it does not attempt to clear up the subject to our capacities but leaves us to say in the language of Christ, *Even so Father for so it seemeth good in thy sight*. It forcibly impresses us with the sentiment that God has a right to do as he pleases with us without explaining to us the reasons of his conduct.

And so far as I may be permitted to judge from my own experience in the trying dispensation to which I have alluded - and I think I may add so far as I can judge from Scripture - the very essence of consolation under trials consists in believing feeling and rejoicing in the sovereignty of Jehovah. Other circumstances may afford some additional consolation when our friends are removed from us - as that their exit from life was easy or that we have reason to hope they are now blessed in heaven or that they were so long spared to us. But it is when faith can fix its eye on the hand of God and see a holy just and merciful Father taking away our friends - it is when faith can see this and feel willing and safe and even joyful that they are in the hands of such a Being and that he is conducting toward them just as will most promote his glory and the good of the universe - it is when faith can repress every murmur and rising doubt with the thought that it is God who does it and cheerfully wait till his dispensations shall be unfolded in eternity for the reasons of the Divine conduct. O then does the mourner know the consolations of the Gospel. And though with Jesus he may weep at the tomb of his departed friend - though the tears of fond remembrance may be often bedew the turf on his grave and though his torn heart may bleed at every pore yet if in the sincerity of his soul he cannot can say *it is the Lord let him do what seemeth him good* - this is the support and the highest consolation of religion. For genuine resignation to the will of God does not consist in laying dead the natural feelings - but in enabling faith to triumph over them and in turning them toward heaven.

But if God does exercise his sovereignty in sending afflictions he does not therefore act without reason although that reason may be hid from us. In the removal of our child we believe he has an object perhaps many objects to accomplish. We have no doubt that one of these objects was the punishment of our sins: and if there is one feeling within us stronger than the rest it is a sense that we deserve that punishment: and it lends a smarting poignancy to the wound to know that the arrow which has pierced



us passed first through the heart of our child. We know too that another object of this trial is to quicken us in preparation for a world of glory. And now Christian friends we earnestly solicit your prayers that these and every other object God has in view in this affliction may be attained and not lost through our perverseness. We do not ask you to pity us because we who but yesterday were parents are childless today – nor because we meet when we go to our desolate habitation instead of the cheering salutation of infant affection nothing but a thousand mementos all leading our thoughts to yonder graveyard. We despise not indeed nay we value your sympathies: but in an object so important to us as the sanctification of this trial we forget all inferior objects and ask only with sincere earnestness for your fervent and effectual prayers.

From this digression I return at length to resume the consideration of the doctrine of God's sovereignty. By this I understand his prerogative or right to act independantly and irresistibly without assigning to his creatures the reasons of his conduct. That he exercises such a sovereignty will appear in the second place from the following consideration.

First, his dealings with nations are evidence of his sovereignty.

History testifies how very various have been the political and religious condition of the different kingdoms of the globe. One has been raised to a high pitch of civilization where the arts and sciences flourished in great perfection while another perhaps immediately contiguous has remained sunk in the very depths of ignorance and barbarism. Some have existed and flourished for centuries under free and equitable governments while others have groaned for centuries under the yoke of despotism. Summon in all their efforts to aggrandize themselves have been suffered to succeed and triumph over their neighbors while those neighbors with the most strenuous efforts have been uniformly degraded and oppressed. Statesmen have written many volumes to show the immediate causes of all this diversity. But should they succeed in this as they never have fully done it must after all be referred to the sovereignty of God and the positive agency of God. Do you say that the differences in the condition of nations proceeds merely from the improvement or abuse of certain privileges? Grant that it is so. Yet God knew beforehand which of them would improve and which abuse their privileges - and in view of this he made no alterations in their condition. Nay that very condition was the result of his own sovereign appointment. So that when God pleased nations under such circumstances as that he knew certain results would take place those results although brought about by second causes are just as indicative of Divine sovereignty as if we could perceive no intervention of second causes.

There is however one circumstance in relation to this subject that points without question to the sovereign appointment of God. Very many important differences in the condition of nations result altogether from differences in the climate of different countries or from other natural causes altogether beyond the power of man to alter or control. One land is a region of barrenness another of fertility – and the national character in those countries will inevitably be different. To what but the sovereignty of God can this be attributed? The African race from peculiarly of climate or other causes altogether beyond the control are born with a different colour from other nations; and this circumstance alone has entailed upon that wretched portion of the globe the heaviest of all calamities that of slavery and sunk the inhabitants into the lowest depths of misery ignorance and superstition. Here we trace in the clearest manner the finger of divine sovereignty and it is one of the most awful and inscrutable displays of that sovereignty.

The religious condition of different nations affords another obvious manifestation of the principle I am endeavouring to establish. For four thousand years only a single nation and that one of the smallest was

blessed with a divine revelation. All the rest were suffered to walk in the sight of their own eyes and after the counsel of their own hearts - groping under the midnight darkness of idolatry and altogether ignorant of the true God. Now it is impossible for us to discover the reason why this nation was thus blessed while all others were not enlightened with the true religion. Men may reason upon the subject forever and still the reasons that actuated the divine conduct will elude their comprehension. It must be referred to the sovereignty of Jehovah and it is not till we can acquiescing say *even so Father for so it seemed good in thy sight*, that we should feel entirely satisfied on the subject. And alike indicative of divine sovereignty is the fact that since the introduction of the gospel into the world it has spread in its purity over very few of the nations. Although 1800 years have elapsed the vast majority of the world still continue ignorant of the only way of salvation without God and without hope in the world. It us with a special reference to the sovereignty of God in the case of the Israelites that Paul wrote those truths generally considered as hard sayings in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Romans - where he exhibits a general principle of the Divine government towards nations and individuals having mercy on whom he will have mercy and hardening whom he will. It is strange that any should resist the evidence the history nations presents that God has always acted on this principle. But this is not the only proof of this doctrine we have within our reach. Yet the others must be deferred till this afternoon. In the meantime may God put within us a humble unprejudiced spirit and open our hearts to conviction that we may not only acknowledge God to be a sovereign but be led to bow to that one sovereign and to rejoice in it even when we are made the monuments of it.

Delivered

At Conway March 1824

At Amherst College April 1829

At Amherst West Parish February 7 1833

At Amherst College October 1835

## Sermon 208 Sovereignty of God Part II

[Sermon No. 208, "Sovereignty of God, Part II" Daniel 4:35, 1824 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 5]

Daniel 4:35

*He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants  
of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?*

*[An interesting discussion about the sovereignty of God in determining the fates of men. The last page  
appears to be missing.]*

On a subject so difficult and so apt to excite prejudices in the human heart as the sovereignty of God it is important that we possess definite views of what is meant by God's sovereignty. In resuming the subject therefore I repeat again the definition given in the morning that the sovereignty of God means his prerogative or right to act independantly and irresistibly without assigning to creatures the reasons of his conduct. I addressed his dealings with nations as one evidence of his exercising such a sovereignty. I proceed to present other proofs of this doctrine.

Secondly the sovereignty of God is manifest from the variety in the birth and education of men.

In examining this argument we must not confine our views to the diversities in respect to birth and education that exist in Christian lands but take a comprehensive glance at the whole human family. And we must bear in mind also how important an influence these diversities exert upon the future character of the man. Nay tell us among what people a child is born and how he is educated and we can almost infallibly predict his future character. If in our western wilds a child is born of Indian parents and is there educated we know he will have prove himself a savage and will probably die such. There is nothing that teaches him that there is any better mode of life. His parents are savages - his companions are savages - those he loves and respects are savages - his habits and opinions and prejudices are all conformed to such a state. These things do not impose indeed upon him any physical necessity of becoming a savage: but they do impose a moral necessity. They render his future savage character almost as certain as if his fate were evolved by the mere revolutions of a machine.

Look at a child brought into existence among the roving Tartars. He draws from his mother's breast the very spirit of a wild rover. His eyes open upon those who look upon no spot as their home and who are ignorant of every milder virtue: and no other objects are ever presented to his view. He grows up of course a wanderer - a fierce untamed independant warrior and lives and dies with the habits and feelings of his fathers and his nation.

Imagine the condition of a child born of Hindoo parents. As early as it learns any thing it learns to regard those of an inferior rank with the supreme contempt and aversion and learns to see unmoved the widow mount the funeral pile - the self devoted victim crushed under the car of Juggernaut or drowning himself in the Ganges and he is told by all whom he loves and respects that the sacrifices are agreeable to the gods. He becomes himself a devotee - mixes in all the cruelty and licentiousness of Pagan worship

and doubts not but by these abominable acts he shall obtain a seat among the blessed.

The child of the Arab is early inured to hardship and danger. It is made even in infancy to brave the vertical sun and the horrors of the sandy desert. And early do the precept and example of its parents and friends steal its heart and its hand against every man and every man's heart against him and he becomes a robber by profession.

The child of the Gurks is early come to the mosque and taught to lisp with reverence the name of Mahomet. The whole weight of exemplified authority and interest serves to repress every doubt and he goes up a rough unyielding barbarous worshiper of Mahomet and an increase to all improvement living on tears and blood.

In Christian lands too there are diversities very great that depend upon the birth and education. The child of the nobleman is early trained in all the soft luxuriance of the palace - his every want is supplied - he perceives himself possessed of power over others - and finds himself surrounded by all the advantages for improvement which affluence and parental solicitude can supply and he comes forward to shine in the Senate or in the field.

But the child of the beggar is born under a hedge he is nourished upon the scantiest fare - he hears the language of beggars - he necessarily forms their habits - drudges through life in obscurity and misery and sinks into the grave unknown and unregarded.

Consider also the case of the child of the man of the world in a Christian land. From his earliest years he hears nothing from those he loves and respects most concerning religion. Their conversation he perceives to be confined to things altogether of a worldly kind, such as hunting - visiting - dancing - getting rich - making a good bargain - the value of property - politics and the like. In these objects he is learnt early to place his expectations of happiness: and before he knows it and without guarding at all against it his taste for such objects is fixed - and if he ever hears of religion he has no relish for it. And as he has always seen it neglected with indifference by those he most respects he neglects it too and goes on careless and unconcerned till it is eternally too late.

Yet look at the child born of Christian parents. It is nourished on the bosom and rocked in the cradle of piety and from its earliest moments the prayers of watchful parents are ascending for its sanctification and salvation. Its first lisps are praises to God and the Lamb. It is taught early both by teaching and example to make religion the grand object of life and from its father's lips it learns the language of prayer. It first respects - then embraces religion - passes through the world with a good conscience and dies with the glorious hope of eternal felicity.

Now my hearers these various circumstances under which men are born and educated are altogether beyond their control: although the birth and education are the very things that usually determine the character in this world and in the next. But if men have not the control of these things who has? Who but God? His sovereignty allots to each individual the precise station and relation in this world which are agreeable to his will: and although he will never punish man for natural defects - although he bestows upon all the means of attaining to his favor - yet the history of this whole world shows that in scarcely any instance do men overcome the difficulties of their birth and education and improve as they might the light God has given them. Yet God for reasons unknown to us and with all this perfectly known to him as chosen to place men in the ten thousand various circumstances in which we actually find them. Human reason and human pride are continually asking why are not the birth and education of all

men alike that thus they may have an equal opportunity of attaining to happiness? But the only answer revelation returns to their enquiries is *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardneth.*

In the third place the unequal distribution of the gifts and bounties of Providence furnishes evidence of the Sovereignty of God.

That there exists a very great variety in the natural endowments of men men will not be denied. The strength of the intellectual powers differs by a thousand gradations from those of an idiot to those of a Newton or a Locke. And this diversity surely can be imputed to nothing but the sovereign will of God.

Still greater than this is a diversity that is found to exist among men in regard to the common blessings of life. One man from his earliest moments is racked through life with pain and borne down by weakness till at last he sinks thankfully into the grave. Another man through a life of threescore years scarcely knows the meaning of pain or sickness by his experience. But his spirits are always free and unencumbered and nothing interrupts his incessant efforts to accomplish his plans. One man finds a full tide of prosperity to attend him through most of his days. His basket and his store are blessed and the labour of his hands and his cattle and his pastures - and his flocks in the pastures. Riches multiply upon him - the elements are propitious - his name is respectable and he passes on upon the pleasant stream of peace and happiness. But another man with equally fair prospects makes equally judicious efforts and yet his way is hedged up. The stream beats against him - the elements seem cornerstoned to make war upon him - his good name is cast out as evil and he is obliged to struggle with poverty and misery through life. One man has friends and relatives growing up in health and peace around him - disease does not approach them and death aims not his dart at them. But his neighbour perhaps follows one after another to the grave till he seems almost left alone on earth like a lightning blasted tree on the mountain. Child and companion father and mother brother and sister he has laid in the grave and wearied out with misery he sighs himself for a release. One man in the morning of life aims at respectability in after days. But he will not bend to the low arts of winning the public applause and approbation of the public is withheld from him while he sees his upstart neighbours without principle and without learning rising to the highest stations and receiving the shouts of fickle populace and the adulation of sycophants. In short look at the various classes in society and see how often industry and economy are rewarded by poverty while the careless spendthrift inherits his thousands - how often adversity pursues unremittingly the virtuous upright religious man while the heart of the proud and unmerciful is cheered by the smiles of prosperity - how often honor and talents and religion are neglected and despised while flippant pertness and insolent ignorance are caressed and exalted - look at these diversities in the Counties of Providence and acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God and that *none can stay his hand or say unto him What doest thou?*

In the last place the differences that are formed among men in regard to personal religion is a strong evidence of the sovereignty of God.

It must be acknowledged by all believers in scripture that there is a vast difference between the man who possesses personal religion and the man who does not. One is prepared for eternal glory - the other for eternal misery. All must confess also that the bible does represent some as prepared for heaven by possessing personal religion while others are ready to sink into hell because destitute of it. And every day's experience bears witness to the same fact. There are many who profess to have in them a hope that their hearts are renewed and there are multitudes also in every place who themselves being judges do not possess personal religion and are not fitted for heaven. Now there must be some cause for this

diversity among men: and as the difference is very great so must the cause be powerful that produced it. This cause is none other than the sovereignty of God. It is his grace that makes men to differ. It is his grace that gives to one personal religion and the withholding of (deficiency) of his grace is the reason why others are destitute of personal religion. And that grace is not bestowed in consequence of any goodness which he witnesses in us: for by nature we are all his enemies but it is bestowed according to the good pleasure of his will. Do you say that the grace of God is bestowed alike upon all men and that the only reason one man becomes religious while the other does not is because the one improves the grace of God and the other does not? Suppose for a moment that this is true. Yet did not God foresee who would improve his grace and who would abuse it? Did he not place men in the very situations they actually occupy and endow them with those passions that lead them to abuse his grace - and did he not know perfectly that in such situations and with such faculties and passions they would certainly abuse his grace and destroy their souls? But if he foresaw all this and it was contrary to his will why did he not place them in different situations or guard them against temptations more firmly - or resolve to give them more grace to enable them to become holy? Why is it not just as much an act of sovereignty in God to excite men with such natures and place them in such a situation that he knew perfectly they should never possess personal religion - why is not this just as much an act of sovereignty as for God to grant special grace to one and withhold it from another? There is certainly no difference in the two cases as respects the sovereignty of God - the one only carries the difficulty a little farther back than the other but the deficiency remains equally strong in both cases.

But is it true - is it agreeable to fact of scripture that all men have an equal measure of grace granted to them and that the sole reason one man becomes religious and the other does not is because the one improves and the other abuses that grace? If it be true we might calculate with certainty that those persons who are the most abandoned and corrupt would be most likely to abuse the grace of God while those who are moral and amiable have a respect for religion would improve that grace. But it is a thing of very frequent occurrence that a man of very bad moral character is converted and leads a holy life and dies a peaceful death while his neighbour whose moral character is good and who respects and attends religions institutions remains unaffected lives without God and dies without hope. These instances I say are very frequent: and certainly they lead us to conclude that God does exercise a special and distinguishing act of grace in thus making them to differ.

And how does the language of scripture agree with the supposition that all men have an equal share of grace bestowed upon them? *By grace are ye saved through faith, says Paul, and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast. Having predestined us, says he to the Ephesians, unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace wherever he hath made us accepted in the beloved.* Children of God are said by Christ to be *born not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.* And Paul in his Epistle to the Romans seems to have settled the question - *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth.*

The undeniable differences then that exist between men in point of personal religion is a most striking display of the Divine Sovereignty. For aught that appears to us God might have changed the hearts of all men: but the bible and facts show us that he does not and while we sigh over the condition of the ungodly we cannot but adore and submit to the holy and inscrutable sovereign of Jehovah in whose hands we are as clay in the hands of the potter.

In looking back upon the subject discussed today I make the following remarks and inferences.

First the subject aims a mortal blow at human pride. Pride wishes to believe that *by the strength of its own arm it has done it and by its own wisdom* but this subject shows us the hand of God controlling and his sovereign will accomplishing every event. Pride is unwilling to be thought dependant - unwilling to be governed and controlled by any other being. But this subject shows us to be altogether in the hands of God. It shows us that he is directing every event of our lives and making such a use of us as he pleases. If he please to bless us we shall be blessed. If he please to afflict us we shall be afflicted. If he please to save us we shall be saved. If he please to condemn us we shall be condemned. But these are humbling cutting...

*[The last page seems to be missing.]*

Delivered

At Conway March 1824

At Amherst College April 1829

At Amherst West Parish February 1833

## Sermon 209 Truth of God

[Sermon No. 209, "Truth of God," Psalms 57:10, 1824 Feb,

EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 5]

Psalms 57:10

*For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.*

*[Reasons for accepting death of loved ones.]*

The general scope and meaning of this passage has already been considered and an attempt made to prove the existence of mercy in the Divine character. His truth is the attribute that now claims our consideration. As the term *truth* has a variety of meanings however it seems necessary to particularize them.

One meaning of the word truth is any proposition that agrees with the actual state of things.

A second meaning of truth is the whole sum of such propositions. This was the signification of the word in the mouth of Pilate when he said to Christ, *What is truth?*

Thirdly all the declarations doctrines precepts and the like that are contained in the Gospel are by way of eminence called the truth. *The Spirit of truth*, says Christ, *shall guide you into all the truth*. Love, says Paul, *rejoiceth in the truth*.

Fourthly. Truth denotes what is real in distinction from what is visionary. Thus the true God in scripture is often opposed to the false Gods of the heathen.

Fifthly. Truth denotes the substance or the reality in opposition to the types and ceremonies of the Jewish law. In this sense Christ says, *I am the way the truth and the life*.

Sixthly. Truth means veracity or a disposition always to speak the truth.

Seventhly. Truth implies faithfulness or a disposition to fulfill all promises whatever.

It is obvious that none of these meanings of the term truth will apply to God except two last. The truth of God therefore consists of veracity and faithfulness. These constituents of his truth I shall consider separately at this time endeavouring

First to prove the veracity of God

And secondly his faithfulness.

First. What are the proofs of God's veracity? Or that he possesses a disposition always to declare the truth.



First. It results from his benevolence which has been proved on a former occasion. Among rational beings a disposition to deceive is regarded as implying a great degree of depravity. When we are certain that any one of our fellow men possesses such a disposition is impossible for us to repose in him any confidence. And even where such a disposition is suspected we dare not trust any important interest. Falsehood and deception therefore are regarded by all men as among the vilest and most detestable vices. It is impossible for us to conceive of a man as really benevolent who possesses this trait of character. Much less then can we conceive of God as infinitely benevolent without supposing him altogether free from a disposition to deceive his creatures - without supposing him to be infinitely removed from falsehood in all his declarations. If we deny the veracity of God therefore we must deny his benevolence.

Secondly the veracity of God results from his immutability and independance. Falsehood is in its very nature mutable. For were a being immutably to utter falsehoods it would amount to the same thing in regard to others as if he always uttered the truth since other beings would always know that the opposite of his declarations was the truth. In order therefore to deceive others it is always necessary that the liar do sometimes declare the truth - that is his conduct is mutable. If God therefore is immutable he must be a God of truth.

Again the independance of God places him infinitely above every temptation to utter a falsehood. All his purposes ever were and ever must be pleasing to him and therefore he must desire and take the most proper measures for executing those purposes. But the direct tendency of deceiving his creatures would be to combine them against his purposes: while perfect veracity in his declarations would inspire them with confidence and make them coworkers with him in the execution of his designs.

Thirdly the veracity of God appears from the scriptures. Balaam filled with the spirit of prophecy says, *God is not the man that he should lie neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good? The works of his hand, says David, are veracity and judgment.* But the inspired declarations on the subject are too numerous to be mentioned. Yet these declarations considered by themselves do not prove his veracity. They merely prove that God has asserted his veracity. And here an obligation may arise in your mind my hearers against every argument and proof of the divine veracity derived from the bible. It may seem to you to be arguing in a circle to bring forward the declarations of God in proof of his veracity when we need the evidence of this in order to be satisfied that his declarations are true. Is not indeed a proof of God's veracity merely because he has declared it: since if he ever assert a falsehood he may in this case as well is any other. But if we find facts corresponding with these declarations of God we have decisive proof of his veracity. And that the history of the bible does furnish such a correspondence be doubted by no one who understands it.

First all the historical declarations of God in the bible perfectly accord with the facts - that is with the real state of things. The testimonies of numerous credible witnesses the testimony of heathens and uninspired Jewish writers and the testimony of nature herself establish the authenticity of the historical parts of the scriptures. These testimonies unite in proving a coincidence between God's declarations and the actual state of things in a majority of instances and we have a right therefore to conclude a like coincidence in those cases we are at this late day incapable of examining by such tests.

Secondly a great number of predictions are uttered in the Bible that have been fulfilled. For more than five thousand years have the prophecies of the bible been fulfilling. This fulfillment has taken place

under every variety of circumstances and been attested by a great variety of witnesses - some of whom were heathen and some Christian - some enemies and some friends. Indeed so exactly in many instances has the prophecy corresponded to the event that it seemed a history although uttered several centuries antecedent to its fulfillment. Witness for instance the the dispersion of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem. In short the history of prophecy has been for thousands of years history a history of the veracity of God.

Thirdly God has promulgated certain doctrines and precepts which come within the cognizance of our reason after they are proposed to it: and between reason and scripture concerning these there is a perfect coincidence evincing the truth of God's word and leading us to the belief that in those doctrines and precepts whose reason we are incapable of understanding there is in fact a like coincidence.

Again God has in many cases in scripture threatened punishment and promised blessings to individuals and nations and in all cases credible witnesses testify that he has inflicted those punishments and bestowed those mercies precisely agreeable to his declarations. He has also demanded truth in his creatures and forbidden falsehood under the severest penalties even eternal ruin and he has also exhibited his love of the truth by bestowing temporal rewards upon those who adhere to and inflicting temporal punishment upon the false and deceitful. All these facts carry with them the strongest conviction that he is himself a God of truth.

I proceed in the second place to prove the second constituent of the truth of God viz. his faithfulness.

Most of the arguments presented under the preceding head to prove the veracity of God apply also to his faithfulness. His faithfulness is implied in his benevolence. It results from his independance and immutability. It is abundantly asserted in the bible and numerous are the instances in which the scriptures record the faithfulness of God in the fulfillment of his promises and threatenings. As these instances are conclusive in proof of his faithfulness and more easily apprehended than abstract argument I shall be more particular in presenting them at this time.

#### 1. The faithfulness of God appears from the fulfillment of his threatenings.

He declared that a curse should fall upon Adam if he ate the forbidden fruit. Adam disobeyed and death the threatened penalty fell upon him and upon all his posterity just agreeable to God's declaration. He threatened the antediluvian world if they repented not of their wickedness. They continued in sin and not one jot or tittle of the divine threatenings failed when the flood poured in upon them and *swept a guilty world to hell*. He told the Israelites that if they obeyed his commands his awful displeasure would be manifested against them and pursue them into every corner of the earth. He pointed out in the most definite manner the very woes he should bring upon them: and their history has been little else than a comment on the divine threatening. Even to this day they stand in every part of the globe a visible and striking memento of the faithfulness of God in executing to the last extremity is threatenings. He declared that the descendants of Ishmael should turn their hands against every man and have every man's hand turned against them. And this sentence contains the whole history of Arabia. He declared of Egypt that it should be the basest of the nations: and language could not more forcibly describe her present condition. And if you wish for more examples of the faithfulness of God to his threatenings go and read them among the ruins of Babylon – of Tyre - of Jerusalem - and the seven churches of Asia.

#### 2. The faithfulness of God appears from the fulfillment of his promises. Those promises respect the world in general the church and individuals.

1. The world in general. God promised that after the Noachian deluge the waters of the flood should no more go over the earth. The waters have accordingly ever since been restrained in the bow of the covenants continues to shine in heaven. God promised that the ordinances of heaven should continue the same to the end of the world. Accordingly after the lapse of nearly 6000 years the harmony and regularity of the motions of the heavenly bodies remain the same as at the beginning. The earth also continues to yield support to its inhabitants agreeably to the divine promise.

2. God's promises concerning the church have been fulfilled.

No promises in scripture are more explicit and full than those concerning Zion and the church. The evidence of this complete fulfillment is accordingly overwhelming. God had engraved Zion on the palms of his hands and her walls were continually before him: and whoever touched her touch the apple of his eye. Does Pharaoh threaten to overwhelm the church? The Red Sea opens and swallows him up with his host. Does the worship of Baal threaten to swallow up the worship of God? He still preserves 7000 in Israel who have not bowed the knee to idols. Are the fires of persecution lighted against the church? The Lord God quenches the flames. Is the sinking in the deep and muddy waters a false doctrine? The Lord says to the waves hitherto shall thou come and no further. In short though God has often borne long with his elect who cry unto him day and night: yet he has never failed to avenge them. At last and amid the incessant assaults of men and devils for 6000 years the church like the burning bush has remained alive and continued to spread her conquest and her glories on every side proclaiming at every step of her onward march the faithfulness of Jehovah.

3. God has always been faithful in his promises to individuals.

God entered into covenant with Adam and was it Adam or God that broke it? A dying world testifies who was deficient. He made a covenant with Abraham; and although when Abraham stood on Mount Mariah with the glittering knife over his devoted son a spectator might have concluded that God had broken the covenant on his part, yet the result served more gloriously to display the faithfulness of God. God promised to the world after Adam's apostasy that the *seed of the woman should bruise the serpents head* and he predicted many things concerning the character birth poverty sufferings death resurrection and ascension of the Saviour. And whoever will compare these predictions with a history of Jesus Christ will find them all fulfilled even to the last draft of vinegar offered him by his brutal enemies.

The faithfulness of God appears also most conspicuously in the fulfillment of his promises to his children. He has promised to such *that he will withhold no good thing from them that trust in him - the bread of the righteous shall be given him and his waters shall be sure*. And David says and his language has been reported by all succeeding Christians: *I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread*.

*God is faithful*, says Paul to the Corinthians, *by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ*. *The Lord will give grace and glory*, says David. Now what Christian ever found that God neglected to bestow upon every thing of a spiritual kind which he has promised. Impenitent men do indeed sometimes complain that God will not answer their prayers according to his promises: but if Christians ask and receive not they always are ready to acknowledge that it was *because they asked amiss*.

God has promised also to his children a support in temptation. *God is faithful*, says Paul, *who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also maketh a way to*

*escape that ye may be able to bear it.* And where is the Christian who has ever said when tempted, *I am tempted of God?* Who that yielded to temptation ever deliberately charges it upon his Maker? Who that sincerely cried to God in the hour of temptation and did not find succor?

God has promised support to his children in affliction. *No chastening, says Paul, for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.* Nature indeed must feel the pangs of heart rent asunder from hearts by the strong arm of death. Jesus himself felt them when he wept at the tomb of his friend Lazarus: and in this dying world they are daily felt by multitudes of bereaved hearts. How can the man for instance who for more than half a century has sustained the relation of a husband and wife as affectionate partner doubled the joys and divided the cares of life whose hopes whose fears and whose aims were the same how could such an one witness without deep and painful emotions the cold hand of death tearing that friend from his bosom and covering her with the clods of the valley! But there is an almighty friend that erelong comes to soothe the Christian's aching heart. There is a physician at hand to bind up his wounds - there is a Holy Comforter near to speak the words of consolation and erelong to cause the Christian to exclaim, *it is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted etc.* And it is a cheering consideration that God never forsakes his children under such trials. It may be longer or shorter before they find their weeping turned into joy - but if they improve by the trial - if they are humbled as God intends they shall be - they do ultimately *go forth and weep bearing precious seed and come again with rejoicing bringing their sheaves with them having beauty for ashes the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the Spirit of heaviness.*

Such are the more prominent evidences of the veracity and faithfulness of God. His truth therefore is established by unquestionable evidence and I close the discourse with a few inferences.

1. If God be a of truth then all who sincerely and penitently commit themselves to him through a Saviour may be certain of his favour. His promises are most plain and explicit on the subject. They cannot be here repeated but the substance of them is that God will never leave nor forsake such; but will bring them finally to his heavenly kingdom. Now if God is immutably true if his veracity and faithfulness are the same yesterday and forever the humble penitent can have and can wish for no greater security. Listen to the apostle on this point: *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, etc.*

2. I infer from the subject that the afflicted may find in the truth of God a firmer ground of consolation than they could find in the promise of the restoration of the departed friends to life. God declares that he does not *afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men: but he chasteneth them for profit.* All things considered therefore it is better for the afflicted and for their deceased friend that they have left the world: that is God declares this to be best and of course their restoration to life would be an evil. But God declares that he took them out of the world because it was best upon the whole and that he intends good shall thereby result to the survivors. Can survivors then wish their deceased friends to be restored to them even if it were possible- when their eternal welfare is the very object God had in view in taking them away? Let them exercise a firm faith in the faithfulness of God. Let them remember that affections are mercies in disguise and if they have any of the Spirit of Christ they cannot but acquiesce in the Divine dealings. This is the consolation I have to offer to those who during the past week among us have been called to grieving and sackcloth – at the departure of one who for so many years has been tottering over the grave. Let them reflect upon the faithfulness of God in preserving her so long - his

faithfulness in afflicting them and his faithfulness in sustaining his children under bereavement - in one word let them reflect that it is God who has done it - and can they ask for can they expect a firmer grant of consolation and support?

Finally the truth of God insures the final punishment of the wicked to the very extremity of the threatening.

*Do you believe it then (says a late writer (Irving) do you think God will not be so bad as his word? When did he fail? Did he fail at Eden when the world fell. Did he fail at the deluge where the world was cleansed of all animals save a handful? Did he fail upon the cities of the plain though remonstrated with by his friend the father of the faithful? Failed he in the ten plagues of Egypt or against the seven nations of Canaan; or when he armed against his proper people did ever his threatened judgments fail? Did he draw off when his own Son was suffering and remove the cup from his innocent lips? And think ye he will fail brethren of that future destiny from which to retrieve us he hath undertaken all his wondrous works unto the children of men! Why if it were but an idle threat would he not have spared his only begotten son and not delivered him up to death? That sacred blood as it is the security of heaven to those who trust in it is the very seal of hell to those who despise it. [Source: Attributed to Edward Irving, ca 1823]*

*[The handwriting is clearly different from here to the end.]*

Disbelieve you cannot; brave it out you cannot; then must you hope at some convenient season to reform. So hoped the five virgins who slumbered and slept without oil in the lamps; and you know how they fared. Neither have you forgotten how the merchant and the farmer and the songs of pleasure, who refused the invitation to the marriage feast of the king's Son, were consumed with fire from heaven. What is your life that you should trust in it; is it not even a vapour that speedily passeth away? What security have you that Heaven will warn you beforehand; or that Heaven will help you to repentance when ever you please? Will the resolution of your mind gather strength as your other faculties of body and mind decay? Will sin grow weaker by being a while longer indulged; or God grow more friendly by being a while longer spurned; or the Gospel more persuasive by being a while longer set at naught? I rede you beware of the thief of time Procrastination. This day is as convenient as tomorrow; this day is yours, tomorrow is not; this day is a day of mercy, tomorrow may be a day of doom. And Oh hearers! is God to be thus entreated by his creatures? Are they to insist for their own convenience and put off the honor of his friendship from time to time preferring this indulgence, that engagement and trifling downright with his proffered invitation? And being thus put off, will the King of the Universe endure it patiently? Yes he endures it patiently that is he leaves you to yourselves and does not cut you off with prompt and speedy vengeance. But he leaves you to yourselves and every refusal hardens you a little more and every resistance closes in another avenue of grace every postponement places further off the power of acceptance; and though God changeth not his mercy we change our capacity of mercy- cooling more and more, hardening more and more till old age with a lethargy and fixed habits, steals on apace and feeble-mindedness and sickness, which brings with it the routine of sick bed attendance but little or no repentance no opportunity for new obedience, no space for trying the Spirit we are of and death to such a penitent becomes a leap in the dark. That as such penitents are named or never, death to such procrastinators rivets up the closing avenues of grace and presents him to the judgment seat fixed, finished and incurable.

Delivered

At Conway February 1824

## Sermon 210 Mercy of God

[Sermon No. 210, "Mercy of God," Psalms 57:10, 1824 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 6 ]

Psalms 57:10

*For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.*

The mercy and the truth of God are figuratively and beautifully exhibited in this passage. It is the warm and impassioned language of a heart kindling and glowing with meditations upon the Divine attributes. It is the language of David when a sense of the mercy and truth of God deeply impressed and roused into healthful and holy action the energies of his soul. It describes these attributes of the Deity as reaching from heaven to earth - as rising so high that they were lost in the clouds and the heavens. In short it represents their perfection and extent to be beyond the comprehension of mortals.

The first of these attributes - the mercy of God - claims our attention this morning. I shall attempt

First to explain the nature of the Divine mercy.

And secondly exhibit the proof of its existence.

First. Explain the nature of Divine mercy.

Mercy consists in the disposition to do good to those who do not deserve it. When applied to Jehovah it means eminently his *readiness to relieve the miserable and to pardon the guilty*. In considering more fully the nature of this attribute I remark

First that the Divine Mercy is a pure emanation of his nature. That is it proceeds from nothing without God: but is inherent in his nature. Creatures may call it into action but it previously existed. The mystery of created beings could not have produced it: for had God been originally unmerciful the sufferings of his creatures could have had no effect to attend an original grasp of his nature. Nor were the sufferings of Christ the cause but the effect of his mercy. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Secondly I remark that the mercy of God is a modification of his benevolence: or rather it is one of the various exhibitions of benevolence. It is benevolence exerted in a particular way towards particular objects. It is love reaching forth to save those who are undeserving - those who are hell deserving.

Thirdly. The mercy of God is infinite. That is we cannot limit it. We do not know indeed how far in particular cases it will be exerted. But we do know that it exerts pardon to guilty man. And since man has committed sins that will drag endless ruin in their train and then too against an infinite being we can set no limits to their enormity. And that to which we can assign no limits we are authorized to say is infinite. So that the mercy which can extend pardon to such offenses must be infinite also. That mercy also promises to the pardoned and infinite and this presents double evidence of the infinity of its nature.

Thirdly the Divine mercy is immutable. As it proceeds from the very nature of God himself who is the

same yesterday and forever it must also be unchangeable. Creatures may indeed have a brighter manifestation of it at one time than another. But the fountain is always alike full and overflowing. *The mercy of the Lord, says the Psalmist, is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.*

Fourthly the mercy of God is sovereign. That is it is bestowed according to his sovereign purpose - agreeable to his perfect wisdom and justice - and not always according to the limited views and selfish feelings of man. Were not his mercy of this character it would clash with other attributes no less essential to his nature. It would rob him of his justice his wisdom his benevolence and holiness. Accordingly it is the uniform language of the scripture that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth. The hardening here spoken of is as much in agreement with his character as his mercy.

Finally the mercy of God is incomprehensible. We cannot limit it and therefore cannot adequately conceive of it. *His thoughts and ways are as high above our thoughts and ways as the heavens are higher than the earth.* We cannot conceive of the extent of that mercy which should sustain rebels in existence as God sustains men when their rebellion is so obstinate and high-handed. Much less can we conceive of the unsearchable richness of that mercy which could elevate these very rebels to eternal glory.

Secondly I proceed to present the evidence reason and revelation furnish that such mercy as this belongs to the Divine Character.

The first proof of the Divine Mercy results from the fact that he is infinitely benevolent. It is difficult for us to conceive of a being of infinite goodness destitute of a disposition to relieve the miserable even though their own crime have made them miserable. This justice may indeed prevent in given instances the exercise of that mercy and as it were compel him to let the demands of justice be fully satisfied on the offender: but still that no disposition to be merciful should exist in that heart which was named by infinite benevolence is inconceivable. It is impossible however for us to decide in what instances the mercy of God can consistently with his other attributes be exerted - nor can we tell how far in a given case it may extend - whether to the bare pardon of the offender or so far as to invest him with honour glory and immortality.

To the question whether the mercy of God is discovered by the light of unassisted reason different answers will be given according to the views men entertain concerning the question whether his benevolence be provable from this source alone. Those who believe it is will not of course deny that his mercy is manifest from the works of nature - and those who suppose his benevolence to be shrouded in impenetrable darkness to the eye of reason will adopt the contrary conclusion. It is unnecessary therefore in this place to enter upon the argument.

The second proof of the Divine mercy is the patience and forbearance of God with men.

In looking into his own heart - back upon his life and upon an ungodly world around him the Christian is often led to enquire with amazement why has not a just God long ere this cut me down while violating with an high hand his most holy laws? Why does he not bring down upon the hearts of ungodly and bold wretches around me who are living in open defiance of his authority the merited bolts of vengeance? His only answer to these enquiries will be that God is a being of boundless mercy. It cannot be denied indeed that the world does present a picture of sin and open abuse of the character law and grace of God which is shocking. They crucified his Son - they have resisted his Spirit they have perverted and

abused his mercies and when he looked down from heaven he saw none righteous no not one. And this picture is now essentially the same in every part of the earth. God sees only a very small number who are living in any measure agreeable to his will: and even in these he sees such inconsistency - such carelessness - such remains of ingratitude and perverseness as would provoke any being whose benevolence was not infinite to swear in his wrath that they should never enter into his rest. He sees the vast majority too even under the broad daylight of the Gospel utterly regardless of its promises and its threatenings and exhibiting towards him nothing but deadly hostility. He sees them trampling underfoot the blood of his Son resisting his Spirit and casting contempt upon the whole plan of mercy he has devised to save them from everlasting perdition. Yet to such guilty provoking apostates does God exercise forbearance and instead of letting loose upon them the thunderbolts of his wrath that are struggling to get vent he still continues to plead with them and beseech them to turn and live. Here is a stretch of mercy which nor man nor angel could exercise. The patience of the meekest man on earth would be exhausted were he to experience the ten thousandth part of the hostility God receives from those he would relieve. And the mercy of an angel would despair of success and have the guilty abusers of his goodness to feel the full effects of their crimes. This argument in favour of the Divine mercy impenitent sinners do not feel! But angels feel it: Christians feel it: and it is and will be eternally their loudest song that the mercy of God was not wholly exhausted.

Thirdly another argument equally striking in proof of the mercy of God is derived from the mediation by Jesus Christ between God and man.

When the criminal is arrested in the very commission of a foul murder and the civil law condemns him to give life for life and he suffers that merited punishment who is there that does not approve the righteousness of the sentence and commend the civil offices for their promptness and fidelity and feel safe under their administration. When man had committed the daring act of high treason against heaven and incurred in the sight of the universe the penalty the holiest and best of laws - all the beings in that universe would have acquiesced in the execution of that penalty upon the offender. Had God cast man upon his apostasy into the same dungeon with the fallen angels *reserving him in everlasting chains under darkness* all holy beings would have felt the most perfect acquiescence in the dead man nor would the least strain have attached to his character are his throne. But God was not satisfied with the mere approbation of his creatures. He wished to make an exhibition before them that would awaken their deepest admiration - that would present the various moral attributes of his character in a more striking light than they had ever before held. He wished to rouse every angels heart to a new and a louder note of praise. He wished to furnish the inhabitants of heaven with a theme of contemplation that would never be exhausted. He wished to display before men and angels the depth of his displeasure against sin while at the same time his benevolence and mercy should shine in unclouded splendor that thus it might be seen how happily his attributes might harmonize in the salvation of offending rebels. All this was accomplished when the Son of God left the eternal throne of heaven which he was honoured even as a Father and stooped to the humble condition of man and endured in his life and death all the wrath of man and devils and what was worse the frowns of his Father while he felt the curse of the broken law pressing heavy upon his soul. Since that work was accomplished - that ransom paid - the propitiation made - and accepted the offers of eternal life have been sounded from heaven wide as the world. A voice of beseeching tenderness has continually echoed around this miserable world calling upon every son and daughter of Adam to trust in the boundless mercy of God as it is displayed in a Redeemer. And if ever mercy can melt the heart of sinful man it is the mercy of God as exhibited in the atonement. It does melt it has melted the stoutest hearts the into a humble and childlike submission and put a new song into the hearts of thousands of our race.



Finally if more arguments are needed to prove the boundless mercy of God after pointing out the cross of Christ - listen to the express declarations of the bible.

The beauty and tenderness with which this attribute is described by David in the 103 Psalm can never be surpassed - *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with after our sins: nor revealed us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust again.* Again he says, *The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all and his tender mercies are over all his works. The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.* But these and other passages of scripture descriptive of these glorious attributes of Jehovah are so numerous and well-known that it is unnecessary to repeat them. It is too consoling and precious an attribute to permit any of us to doubt its existence. I close therefore with a few remarks.

First subject shows us the value of the bible. Estimate as high as we may the achievements of unaided reason it is the bible after all that brings forth into distinct view the mercy of God and shows us its nature and how far in the case of man it will be exercised. It is a problem unaided reason never yet solved whether God would or could pardon sin. Heathen philosophers might say that they saw evidence of the divine benevolence around them but whether it could extend far enough to reach the case of sinners so as to restore them to favour it was beyond their researches to determine. Socrates the wisest of them acknowledged this: and if they could not know whether God would forgive sin at all much less could they determine on what conditions it would be granted. How deep and gloomy then must have been the night in which they wandered and how dark and dismal must the grave have appeared to them and with how many distracting doubts and fears must the best of them have descended into the grave! But the bible throws the bright and clear rays of heaven upon this point and presents to us a God of boundless mercy stooping down from his glorious throne of justice and proclaiming mercy pardon and acceptance to all who come to him in the name of the merits of the Saviour. The darkness disappears and the true light now shineth: and if we perish we are lighted down to hell by the beams of infinite mercy.

Secondly we derive a caution from this subject not to suffer the mercy of God to absorb and obscure the other attributes of God. We feel so anxious to escape final punishment for our sins that we are very prone to look so exclusively upon the benevolence and mercy of God as to forget his justice and truth and holiness. This is the fatal rock on which thousands yearly make shipwreck of their souls. They rest in some loose views of the mercy of God and exclude his justice and hatred of sin almost entirely. But it is abundantly evident that God could not be benevolent or merciful were he not also strictly and immutably just. He might indeed exercise mercy toward individuals: but not without rendering him unjust to the universe and that does not deserve the name of mercy that sacrifices the happiness of the whole for the happiness of a few. The subject is most happily exhibited in the holy scriptures. The Lord proclaimed himself to Moses amid the the thunder and lightning of Sinai as *the Lord the Lord God merciful and gracious long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth* and keeping mercy for thousands forgiving iniquity transgressions and sin. Well then, says the sinner, God is so merciful he cannot punish me with everlasting destruction: it is shocking to think he will - and I have nothing to do but to live a normal life and I need not fear. But sinner listen to the other part of this proclamation of Jehovah: when he says that he forgives iniquity transgression and sin he adds that *he will by no means clear the guilty*. It is certain then that mercy as God himself explains it is not inconsistent with his

punishing sin. And how severely he may punish it we are totally unable to decide unless he reveal it to us: and he has revealed to us that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment.

And thirdly my hearers what punishment do not those deserve who can resist such mercy as God has exhibited to our fallen race? All do despise it who do not accept of that mercy that is offered through his Son. Do you find doubt in your mind concerning the justice of God and punishing sinners eternally? Cast an eye upon cast upon his mercy - see it sparing guilty rebels from merited punishment - see if offering them salvation and pardon and internal life - see mercy incarnate bleeding and dying on the cross - and then behold sinners resisting all this mercy and turning their backs upon it and despising it: and they say is there any punishment too long. I had almost said is there any punishment too severe for such? The single fact that they have resisted the force and the tenderness of infinite mercy will be enough to stop the mouth of the inhabitants of hell through all eternity and every holy angels hark with the song – just and true O Lord are they judgments.

Finally how broad is the foundation on which the penitent may build his hope of pardon and acceptance with God!

Wide as have been the ravages of sin the mercy of God as exhibited to the penitent through a Saviour is wider. The poison of sin may rankle and circulate in our very life blood: but the blood of Christ has a sovereign power to wash it all away. Ragged and vile as we may be in our own righteousness the mercy of God can cover us with the spotless and seamless robe of a Saviour's righteousness. Stern and unyielding as are demands of the law, mercy has satisfied its demands, and now says to the penitent, *Ye are not under the law but under grace*. Do you say that your sins rise like mountains? So does the mercy of God rise above the mountains. You say your sins are too great to be forgiven? They cannot be so great as the mercy of Christ. They cannot be so great as the mercy of God. This to the penitent is unlimited as the nature of God.

*'Tis full outmeasuring every crime*

*Oe'r sins unnumbered as the sand,  
And like the mountains for their size,  
The seas of sovereign grace expand,  
The seas of sovereign grace arise. [Hymn by T. Gibbons, date unknown]*

Delivered

At Conway February 1824

## Sermon 211 Benevolence of God

[Sermon No. 211, "Benevolence of God," Matthew 19:17 Part I, 1824 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 6]

Matthew 19:17

*There is none good but one, that is God.*

*[In paragraph 24 the death of infants is discussed. Also a theological discussion about why God permits sin to exist in the universe.]*

With the omnipotence of God, discussed the last sabbath, I finished my proposed examination of the natural attributes of God. His moral attributes next demand attention. And as moral beings, especially as sinners, we must, it would seem, take a deep interest in examining these since God's moral character has so important a relation to our conditions and incorrect apprehensions of this will almost inevitably lead us to take wrong steps in seeking a restoration to his favour. The goodness or benevolence of God lying at the foundation of all his attributes seems first to claim our attention. The text is the reply of Christ to the young ruler who addressed him by the title of *good master*. Christ said unto him, *why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God*. That is no mere man is good in comparison with God. The ruler had no idea that Christ was anything more than a man: yet he had given him the title of good. And for this the Saviour reproved him without saying any thing concerning his own real character. He knew that the young man had no sense of the native wickedness of the human heart and convinced him of this point he made his first and his last efforts. Yet the declaration in the text is an independant proposition applicable under every circumstance viz. that the goodness of God so far exceeds all human goodness that there is no comparison between them.

An enquiry has long been agitated among the ablest writers whether the benevolence of God is discoverable by the light of nature. And so many things are to be taken into the account that this becomes to many a question of difficulty and perplexity. All men however agree that God is infinitely good or as the apostle expresses it that *God is love* but the question is whether there exists demonstrable proof of this without the bible.

In the first place I shall therefore exhibit the evidences of the benevolence of God that the light of nature presents.

And then proceed secondly to the proofs of his benevolence from revelation.

First what are the evidences of God's benevolence from the light of nature?

A difficulty meets us in the commencement of this enquiry. It is scarcely possible for those who have been educated in the full flower of the Gospel to discriminate precisely between those things which reason alone and those which revelation discovers. The bible often refers to nature and furnishes us with many clues for understanding principles which are fairly provable from reason but which man never would have discovered had not revelation first thrown into their minds the key with which to

unlock the storehouse of nature. But when we have entered the field of nature and find ourselves at length surrounded by a thousand evidences of any particular truth we forget the guide who first pointed out to us the path thither and vainly fancy that *by the strength of our own hand we have done it and by our own wisdom*. Many of the best principles advanced by modern deists are derived from revelation although they have no idea but they have discovered them by their own sagacity. And *many of those writers who profess to give us the decisions of reason concerning the doctrines of theology, while they direct one eye to the volume of Nature, seem to us to throw the other askance upon the volume of Revelation*. In order to determine precisely what unassisted reason does teach it is necessary to transport ourselves back into Pagan Greece and Rome and enter the walks of her philosophers and sages. And even then it ought not to be forgotten that very probably many rays of light were thrown unperceived from the old testament into the act academies and porticoes of Rome and Athens.

The first argument derived from reason alone in favour of the Divine Benevolence results from the supposed necessity of God's existence. I have however on a former occasion in treating of the existence of God expressed an opinion that the whole of the argument concerning the necessary existence of God is radically deficient and inconclusive (This argument however is now abandoned by the critical writers). And if so the inference in favour of God's benevolence falls to the ground.

The second argument of reason presents for the Divine Goodness is an inference from the natural to the moral attributes of God. The argument in brief is this. *A being of boundless knowledge can with perfect ease continue that scheme of providence which will on the whole be the best possible. A being of infinite power can with equal ease carry this scheme into effect. The happiness of the Deity must depend on his employing his power to execute what his wisdom decides to be best, for uneasiness and remorse would be the inevitable attendants of the least deviation. Yet he cannot but pursue his own happiness; therefore the conclusion is unavoidable that he always does what is best; or in other words that he is a being of perfect moral rectitude*. There is fairness and simplicity in this argument but the conclusion has been objected against. It has been asked whether it is clear and certain that *a being of infinite power and knowledge must necessarily pursue own highest happiness*? Reasoning without facts indeed we should conclude that he would do so. And we should conclude the same in regard to finite intelligent creatures as men and angels. But Satan and his angels with the full knowledge before them that the path of rectitude was the only path of happiness nevertheless deviated from that path and chose to become sinful and miserable. (This fact, however, not being discernable by reason is not to be taken into consideration in this argument.) The same is the case with men. They know that perfect virtue can alone ensure perfect happiness and that they have power to be virtuous yet all voluntarily choose sin and misery. How then can we say that the same may not be the case with an infinite being? At least, do any powers of intellect however great or any condition however independant prevent the supposition that there may exist an original propensity to communicate evil? Which is so strong as to overpower every thing else.

This objection it must be confessed is not without its weight to invalidate the second argument for the divine goodness. I will however present the argument in a somewhat different light and leave it to your reflections.

In the first place it is said that God can have no possible motive to malevolence. There is no such motive furnished from the nature of things. For it is impossible to believe that it is more desirable to be malevolent than benevolent. Nor can any such motive be presented to God from without himself. All other beings are just what he pleases to make them and of course possess nothing which he can either fear or covet. So that there can be nothing in them to induce him to the exercise of malevolence toward

them.

And secondly an omniscient being must see that in every respect it is most more desirable to sustain and exhibit a benevolent than a malevolent character.

Even men shortsighted and imperfect as they are clearly perceive the truth of this position. It cannot therefore be unknown to omniscience. On the other hand it is equally clear to our faculties that the exercise of malevolence in an infinite Being must produce infinite misery to himself and to his creatures: and this also is much more distinctly perceived by God than ourselves. We find an infinitely powerful motive operating to prevent in God the indulgence of an evil disposition. Unless therefore an overwhelming necessity of his nature urges him on to deeds of malevolence we must conclude him to be swayed by goodness.

The third argument reason presents in proof of the benevolence of God results from the fact that men are placed either in a state of rewards or a state of trial.

These are the only states in which rational beings can be placed who have not sinned in a previous state and thus rendered themselves deserving of punishment. But if we are placed in a state of such reward as malevolence would bestow we are vastly more happy than is consistent with the supposition of infinite malevolence in God. And if we are placed in a state of trial the circumstances of our condition are alike repugnant to the suppositions of a malignant disposer of our state. For universally men condemn themselves when they exercise an evil position that is they condemn themselves for that which is agreeable to the will of God if he be malevolent and they universally approve of virtue that is of what is contrary to God's will. If then they be judged by a malevolent Being they will be condemned for that which their conscience approved and rewarded for what they feel to be despicable and vile. Such a condition as this cannot be called a state of probation with any propriety. But reverse the picture and assume that God is benevolent and all is consistency.

In the fourth place the goodness of God displayed in the present world (general condition of animated nature) furnishes to reason a powerful argument in favour of the benevolence of his character.

This is the strongest and most satisfactory of all the arguments reason alone furnishes on the subject.

In the first place *in a vast plurality of instances in which design is perceived the design of the contrivance is beneficial.* This is one of the arguments brought forward and defended with much acuteness by Dr. Paley in his *Natural Theology*. And perhaps it cannot be stated in clearer and more convincing language than that which he has clothed it in his *Moral Philosophy: Contrivance*, says he, *proves design and the predominant tendency of the contrivance indicates the disposition of the designer. The world abounds with contrivances and all the contrivances which we are acquainted with are directed to beneficial purposes. Evil no doubt exist but is never that we can perceive the object of contrivance. Teeth are contrived to eat not to ache; their aching now and then is incidental to the contrivance; perhaps inseparable from it or even if you will let it be called a defect in the contrivance; but it is not the object of it. This is a distinction which well deserves to be attended to. In describing instruments of husbandry you would hardly say of the sickle that it is made to cut the reaper's hand though from the construction of the instrument and the manner of using it this mischief often follows. But if you had occasion to describe instruments of torture or execution this engine you would say is to extend the sinews; this to dislocate the joints: this to break the bone; this to scorch the soles of the feet. Here harm and misery are the objects of the contrivance. Now nothing of this sort is to be found in the works of nature. We never*

*discover a hair of contrivance to bring about an evil purpose. No creationist ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease; or in explaining the parts of the human body ever said this is to irritate; this to inflame; this duct is to convey the gravel to the kidneys; this gland to secrete that humour which forms the gout; if by chance he come at a part of which he knows not the use, the most he can say is, that it is useless; no one suspects that it is just there to incommode, to annoy or to torment.*

Secondly *The Deity has added pleasure to animal sensations beyond what was necessary for any other purpose (than that of producing the pleasure) or when the purpose so far as it was necessary might have been effected by the operation of pain!* This is also an argument successfully brought forward by Dr. Paley and it would demand a volume fully to illustrate it. There are many things pertaining to animals that are not necessary to their existence and these things have within them a tendency to produce happiness. Many of the faculties of the mind and heart are of this description and much that belongs to the sense of hearing seeing feeling tasting - such as delightful prospects - agreeable music and the like. And further even in regard to those powers and faculties that are necessary to the existence of animals they might have been so constituted as to produce intense pain when they now produce pleasure. Thus every sound might have been discordant and every object hateful and terrifick. Now the fact that in a vast number of instances this pleasure is superadded to what was necessary shows that the Deity had a further design than the mere presentation of animals preservation of animals. It shows too that this design must have been benevolent since its natural results are so.

Other arguments have frequently been adduced to prove from reason alone the benevolence of God: but I am inclined to believe that few others will stand the test of examination. And it is better to present only a few arguments that are sound than many which are defective. To all these arguments however there exists one grand objection viz. the existence of evil in the world. This it is said is inconsistent with the supposition of God's benevolence - that is, it invalidates all the evidences that seem to prove that benevolence. This objection must not be passed unnoticed.

The evil which is alluded to in this objection is of two kinds - natural evil and moral evil.

It is objected that the existence of natural evil is not reconcilable by reason with the benevolence of God.

Natural evils are such as are borrowing by upon men by unintentional agents - such as that they are subject from their very condition and for which they do not feel themselves guilty - so far as evils are considered in themselves although they may be sensible but they are the result of their former misconduct. And in regard to these evils I remark

First that by far the greater proportion of natural evils do result from the improvidence and wickedness of men. Poverty and disease are two of the most formidable of natural evils yet in how great a majority of instances do these result from sloth, profusion, intemperance, rashness, fraud falsehood contention oppression war imprudence passions and the like! We ought therefore in considering this objection make a separation between those evils caused immorally by God and those caused by man.

I remark secondly that the natural evils God brings upon men are always less than they deserve. This will not be denied in regard to wicked men: and the best of men have always been ready to confess that they suffered far less than their iniquities deserved. It will be said however that infants often suffer severely without having been guilty of sin at all. We cannot indeed finally understand all the

dispensations of God towards infants. But how do we know that they suffer more than they deserve? [*This sentence has been crossed out:* The moment they become capable of moral action they universally commit sin]. And who will undertake to say how early they are sinners in the sight of God. Certainly if we find that God does not inflict evils greater than deserved in all cases that we can understand we have no reason to conclude he does in those cases we cannot fully understand. [*In bracket:* But a being who inflicts less upon criminals than they deserve must be benevolent.]

I remark in the third place that natural evil is a necessary part of a benevolent system towards a sinful world. It is necessary to check iniquity in its progress and to prevent it from producing to the full extent those horrors its very nature is calculated to bring upon the world. That such is the effect of natural evil upon sinners cannot be doubted a moment. These evils also tend to produce a salutary influence upon all men both good and bad. Nothing is more dangerous to the lasting peace of men than interrupted worldly prosperity. The tendency of these evils then in such a world as ours is benevolent.

2. It is objected that the existence of moral evil is inconsistent with the benevolence of God.

By moral evil I mean that which is produced by intentional agents. In other words I mean the evil of sin. In the whole of theology there is not a more difficult subject than that of the introduction of moral evil into the universe. It is a difficulty that is not peculiar to any system of religion - not peculiar to revelation: for natural religion also is encumbered with it. [*This sentence is crossed out:* I am not fond of spending much time in endeavouring to account for the entrance of sin into the universe for on this subject I have very little confidence in the reasonings of any man.] The probability is that the existence of sin is an ultimate fact in the empire of God: and it is far more profitable that we spend our strength in endeavouring to drive it out of the world than in showing how it came into the world. To vindicate the character of God against sceptical insinuations is however important. To show also that God is not the efficient author of sin in such a sense that he is chargeable with the blame of it is also important. I remark then on this objection

In the first place that it cannot be proved that God is the efficient author of sin.

It is the declaration of scripture on this subject that *no man may say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, an enemy hath done this.* These are sentiments that command themselves to conscience and unbiased judgment of all men: and I must think it belongs to a perversion of reason to charge the sowing of the tares in this world upon the Maker of it.

I remark secondly that God was not obliged by justice or benevolence to prevent the existence of sin. We may find it difficult to reconcile the existence of sin with these attributes: but we cannot prove there is any inconsistency between them. And plainly because we are incapable of looking through this subject and all its relations and bearings. We should not be prepared to say it was inconsistent with God's benevolence to place man in a state of trial: but a state of trial implies a liability to sin. How then can the fact of sinning be shown to be contrary to benevolence in God?

I remark in the third place that the existence of moral evil may be the means of making to the universe a more striking and glorious display of the Divine perfections. It may illustrate more fully than any other mode the excellence of the Divine law and government and inspire throughout the universe a more

ardent enlightened and pure attachment to the character of God and thus raise the inhabitants of heaven to a higher state of enjoyment - so that the sum of final happiness shall by this means be greatly increased. We can see many things that render such effects not improbable and Omniscience may see many more of the same character. We are authorized therefore in saying that it cannot be proved that sin will be in the end a detriment to the universe and therefore its permission or even ordination cannot be shown to militate against the benevolence of God. (Bring in the town paper here)

This my hearers is one mode (and I am inclined to think the best mode) of answering the objections devised from the existence of natural and moral evil against the goodness of God. Another method is to refer them all to the necessary constitution of the world [*The following has been crossed out: to attempt to account for the misery which evil has introduced. This is briefly as follows.*]

Evil in its largest extent is of three kinds termed metaphysical natural and moral.

Metaphysical evil is the evil of defect or imperfection in the nature adaptation or contrivance of things. It is that evil which results from the fact that created beings do not possess the attributes of God. Their natures are limited and therefore imperfect.

Natural evil results from the operation of unintentional agents - as already explained in another part of this discourse.

Moral evil results from the operation of intentional agents - that is it is the evil of sin.

Now the proposition is that natural evil has its origin in moral evil and moral evil in metaphysical evil and that metaphysical evil has no author - that is it results from an imperfection inseparable from the very nature of created beings. Or perhaps the statement may be less objectionable to say that natural and moral evil have their origin in metaphysical evil. This material evil does not result from contrivance - there is no contrivance whose object is to produce natural evil - but it results from a defect of contrivance which is the same as metaphysical evil. Nor could a created being exist as a free agent without being liable to fall into sin: that is being liable to introduce moral evil. Thus we trace back both kinds of evil to defect of contrivance or adaptation of things - that is to metaphysical evil. And this would not have been presented even by God himself since it is inseparable from the very nature of created beings and no being by himself is free from it. Metaphysical evil therefore has no author - for its results not from what we possess but from what we do not possess that is a mere negation. God therefore is the author of evil in no other sense than that he does not prevent it.

It is impossible to exhibit at this time the arguments in favour of this theory of the introduction of evil into the universe or to answer the objections with which it is encumbered. I leave it therefore to your own meditations.

*[The following paragraph is written on a small scrap of paper that appears as page 10 in the scanned images; it is not clear where in the text the paragraph was intended to be inserted.]*

If in nine cases out of ten your father does that which you ascertain is intended for your happiness will you infer because in the tenth instance he does something that afflicts you that he is actuated by a desire to make you miserable? You could certainly infer that he had some reason for his conduct which you did not understand and that ultimately you would find what you now call evil to be a blessing. Why should not the same just inference be drawn respecting God's dealing when in a vast majority of



instances we see happiness to be the direct result of his arrangements? Because you can see with the telescope what seems to you a dark spot on the sun – how illogical to infer that the sun is all dark! When his beams continually enlighten and cheer you.

And now in conclusion of the subject what must we conclude concerning the proof of the divine benevolence from the light of nature alone? What would a heathen conclude? Does that part of the creation which the light of nature makes known accord with what a mine constituted like ours would naturally expect from a being of boundless goodness? *[The following sentence is crossed out.]* You have my hearers the principal arguments now presented before you on both sides of this subject and to my mind I cannot doubt but you will reply that the evidence decidedly preponderates in favour of the affirmative side of the question. Viz. that there is sufficient evidence from reason alone to prove God benevolent. It appears to me that the language of scripture applies as much as this - *The invisible things of him (God) are clearly seen from the creation of the world, says Paul, being understood by the things that are made even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without exercise; because when they knew God they glorified him not as God, etc. (Romans 2.20) Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness in that he did good and granted no rain from heaven and fruitful seasons filling our hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14-17).* How could the heathen here referred to be *without excuse* if the benevolence of God were not discoverable to them? But still when I consider the difficulties in which the subject is enveloped and the darkness of a heathen's understanding through the blindness of his heart I am no longer surprised at the extravagant notions which prevailed in pagan nations on this subject. I do not wonder that the wisest of their philosophers suppose a blind and refractory force to be inherent in matter tending to evil which God himself could not subdue - that the Epicureans regarded the world as the result of chance and that the Persians Manichaeans and Paulerians supposed that the two supreme principles the one good the other evil were contending for the empire of the world. They could not but see many obvious marks of the divine goodness: but they saw also many equally striking evidences of disorder and misery and their minds must have often balanced in the most trying uncertainty.

I have now gone through the course of reasoning I proposed on this subject than which few are more difficult in theology. In proceeding to the second part of the subject where I am to consider the proof of the Divine benevolence from revelation I trust you will find occasion to bless God that we have this more sure word of prophecy to which we shall do well to take heed as to a light shining in a dark place. But its consideration must be deferred till the afternoon.

*[The preceding paragraph has been crossed out and appears to have been replaced by the following paragraph.]*

With the clear light however that shines in our path even aside from revelation we ought not only to reject such absurdities but to be impressed with the Divine Benevolence so as to experience continually grateful emotions whenever we study the wonderful arrangements the beautiful adaptations of this lower world to our physical and intellectual wants. Nor should we indulge in that morbid melancholy which sees only a pall of sorrow spread over nature and binding her smiling face and which converts her sweet voice into grossness and her noblest means into infernal discord.

Delivered

At Conway January 1824

At Amherst College November 1826 (Read to the junior class)

At Amherst College September 1844

## Sermon 212 Eternity of God

[Sermon No. 212, "Eternity of God," Hebrews 1:10-12, 1823 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 6]

Hebrews 1:10-12

*And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the  
foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work  
of thine hands. They shall perish; but thou remainest:  
and they all shall wax old as doth a garment: and as  
a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed:  
but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

On the last Sabbath I made an attempt to prove the existence of one God and I now proceed to a consideration of his attributes. The term attributes is but another name for a perfection of God. There are certain qualities in man which are requisite to form his character: and according to the nature of these qualities whether good or bad will be his character. In the same manner those qualities or as they are more usually called those perfections that are reason perceives or scripture assures us exist in God constitute his character. Concerning the real nature of that substance in man called the soul we are altogether ignorant. We know nothing concerning it except by its properties and qualities and just so is it in relation to the nature of the substance of God. That such a substance exists we may be absolutely certain without being able to ascertain its nature. The same is true of matter of every kind as well as of Spirit. In looking around us we perceive certain substances that have extensive magnitude and figure but we can proceed not one step forward beyond this. That secret something in which these properties are inherent absolutely eludes the grasp of the human faculties.

The attributes of God have usually been divided into the two kinds material and moral. Some writers have supposed all the natural attributes to be comprehended under power and knowledge and that benevolence comprehends all those that are moral. Others have represented the divine wisdom as the spring of all the actions of the Deity. Others suppose rectitude to comprehend the whole these different views however all amount in the end to the same thing since none will deny that God possesses in his character every possible perfection. The only contention seems to be concerning the meaning of words. Most divines however comprehend the natural attributes of God under the following names Eternity Immortality Omnipresence Omniscience Omnipotence and Independance and his moral attributes are Benevolence Justice Truth Mercy and Wisdom. It so happens that some other perfections are so related that they can without confusion be treated of in the same discourse. And I write invite your attention this morning to the Eternity and Immortality of God. My object will be to prove that He is possessed of these. And that proof I shall derive

First from Reason

And secondly from Revelation.

1. From Reason

By the eternity of God I mean that he is a being who never had a beginning and will never have an end. But this distinction you will perceive my hearers is merely a negative one. That is it asserts what does not belong to God and not what the eternity of his nature is. It asserts that he had not a beginning and will not have an end: but it does not describe his eternity. And indeed to do this is beyond the power of man. We are totally unable to comprehend eternal existence. The mind may go back through one period of duration and then through another and another until it is lost in the boundless field and yet it has not even approach to an eternal duration because finite and infinite do not admit of comparison. It is important that we bear in mind in our enquiries concerning God that we cannot define many things concerning his nature affirmatively but only by negatives.

But to proceed to the proof of God's eternity. If God had a beginning then there was a period in which nothing existed since all will allow him to be the original cause of all things in existence. But if such a period had been it would still have continued unless we suppose nothing to have been an active cause of God's existence which is gross absurdity since every effect supposes a positive cause. It is indeed impossible for us to conceive of a being whose existence is uncaused: but the proof of the fact is complete although it is among the things of God that are unsearchable by human or indeed by any created faculties. The whole difficulty lies in the fact that all powers are limited.

By the immutability of God I understand that he cannot change in *his manner of being his perfections thoughts desires purposes or determinations*. Some have been led to suppose that by this attribute it is meant that there is something inexorable in the Divine character - like the cruel obstinacy and unbending severity of an earthly tyrant. But this is altogether an erroneous idea. It contradicts his other attributes which represent him as waiting to be gracious ready to hear and answer prayers and forgive sin. The truth is God is immutably merciful – immutably benevolent and placable. He is unchangeable in these things as well as in others.

The evidence that God is immutable results from the fact that God can have no new idea or thought. God is the author of everything that exists and of course he contrived them all: and therefore all their bearings and operations and qualities must have been originally known to him. To suppose that he did not at that time know every event that would result from the works he had made is to suppose his knowledge to be limited which as I shall show on future occasions is contrary to demonstrable proof. If this omniscience be granted to God it follows that neither his works nor his nature can furnish him with a new idea or thought. And if so it is impossible there should be any change in his desires or attributes or purposes since such a change would imply a previous change of the mind resulting from farther examination or the occurrence of some event previously unknown. In short it is impossible to suppose any change in God without supposing in him some sort of imperfection.

I proceed secondly to prove the eternity and immutability of God from revelation.

And here the text presents itself as conclusive on both these points. It is taken by Paul from the 102nd Psalm: and in that Psalm it starts thus - *I said O God take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hand. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them and they shall be changed. But thou are the same and thy years shall have no end.* A sublime and forcible contrast is here drawn between the mutability and short duration of the material universe and the immutability and eternity of God. He is first represented as putting together the immense frame of creation and then as folding it up when its object was answered and laying it aside as useless. But in the midst of this change and dissolution the ever living God remains

serene and unchanged inhabiting the praises of eternity. Paul indeed in the text applies this passage to Christ when describing his infinite superiority to angels. Of the Angels he saith who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire. *But unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hands*, etc. But in the Psalm just quoted this passage is expressly applied to the supreme God. Either then the apostle made a wrong application of it in Hebrew or Christ does possess the attributes of eternity and immutability. For language more exactly expressive of these attributes could hardly be used. And to those who believe it was not robbery in Christ to be equal with God this language will be regarded as alike applicable to both. And I leave those who do not thus believe to reconcile these facts if they can with any other belief.

But to progress with the proof of God's eternity the names of God that are applied to him and to him alone are Jehovah and Jerh whose meaning is existence in its most absolute sense bounded neither by time nor space. To this it may be added that the Psalmist in another place than that just quoted says in his address to Jehovah. *Before the heavens were brought forth or even thou hadst formed the earth and the world even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God*. And who does not remember how often in scripture God is styled *Eternal and Everlasting*!

The immutability of God is also most plainly exhibited in various parts of the bible. God himself in Malachi says - *I am the Lord and change not*. James also establishes this attribute beyond all dispute. *Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning*.

The eternity and immutability of God being thus demonstrably established what remains but to close with a few inferences and remarks!

And first - the subject shows us that the eternity of God is very different from the eternity of created intelligent beings. Their eternity had a beginning although it will never have an end. But that of God has neither beginning nor end. Man begins his existence as it were midway between past and present eternity. And yet how absurd is it in this reality to talk of a midway in eternity. For in truth one point of time is no nearer the middle of eternity than another how far soever they may be separated. In fact there is no such as a middle point in eternity. And this leads me to remark

Secondly that the duration of God's existence is not measured like that of man's by the revolutions of time.

All our ideas of duration are derived from the changes that take place around us - either in ourselves or other objects. But God is immutable and no new idea can ever enter his mind. Besides time is totally inapplicable as a measure of the divine existence: for it is made up of a succession of changes that is of a succession of periods each of which is an unit and all the units of the series are numerable and therefore finite and incapable of measuring eternity.

Thirdly the subject shows us that we have and can have no idea of the manner in which our eternal existence will be measured.

We are entirely ignorant of every other mode of estimating duration but by the revolutions of time. But these it has been shown are entirely inapplicable to the eternity of God and of course they are inapplicable to the future eternity of man. Time will cease in eternity and by what new mode the

duration of immortality will be estimated we know not: *but we shall know hereafter*. To talk of the ages of eternity the periods or years of eternity then is to talk of that which will never exist: but still it is the nearest approach to the truth to which ignorant man can arrive and therefore the language is proper. What a lesson of humility are we here taught!

In the fourth place I remark that the attributes we have been contemplating seem absolutely necessary to the perfect character of God.

Indulge for a moment the thought that God is not eternal and immutable and you cannot avoid conceiving of him as an imperfect being. Is he destitute of eternity? Then he cannot always be present to uphold direct and govern the works of his hand nor can he be possessed of all knowledge. He cannot offer to the virtuous eternal rewards nor threaten the wicked with eternal punishments. His promise on the one hand would be useless and his threatenings on the other hand would be unmeaning.

Without immutability God would not be able to devise and carry into execution one fixed plan in his works. That which pleased him today would disgust him tomorrow and instead of that beautiful uniformity and sameness of design which we now see running through the whole creation binding heaven to earth and earth to heaven spirit to matter and matter to spirit we should witness but little else except confusion and chaos - disorder and misery. His intelligent creatures could place in him no reliance and might well regard him as imperfect arbitrary and capricious.

But in the fifth place with what a glorious character do these attributes invest Jehovah!

We behold him by them raised infinitely above all the changes of the universe. He speaks the word and all this wide and fair creation springs up before him teeming with life and happiness and beauty. But when the object for which it was created was accomplished his almighty hand is withdrawn and suns and worlds and all their inhabitants rush together into one common river. Yet amid the dissolution of nature amid the convulsive agonies of an expiring universe Jehovah still remains on his eternal throne the same yesterday today and forever totally inaccessible to the reach of accident and decay and no more affected by the destruction of the world than the destruction of an atom.

In the sixth place I remark that these attributes are a ground of terror to the wicked.

If God is to exist forever he exists as their eternal enemy. For by his immutability his feelings towards them can never change unless they change their characters and this will be impossible since it is the unchangeable decree of God that no grace shall ever be granted to the finally impenitent. Is God now infinitely opposed to sin and to sinners? That opposition must remain unchangeably the same through eternity. Has he threatened the impenitent with everlasting punishment? Then those threatenings will be executed up to the full extent of them. It is impossible from the very nature of God that they should be in the least mitigated or attenuated or altered. Let the unregenerate then remember with what a being they have to do. Were it man they might hope for some change in his determination but though heaven and earth will pass away his word will not pass away. God never can change: therefore they must have their hearts changed or they can never enter his presence. Knowing God to possess these attributes of immutability and knowing that he has said *except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God*, how can any soul be so mad as to imagine he shall somehow or other enter heaven although his heart be not changed! He may be certain that God will always exist to punish him that his immutability will not permit him to suffer one jot or tittle to pass from the law till all be fulfilled

But finally these attributes of God are a sure foundation of hope and joy to the righteous.

They may be as certain that God will fulfill his promise to them as the wicked may be that he will execute his threatenings. God has promised them eternal life and well might Christ say that none *was able to pluck them out of his Father's hands*. Their sins may assail them the world may allure the Adversary may harass but the Immutable God has promised that they shall be finally conquerors and that the good work he has begun in their hearts shall continue until the day of Jesus Christ. He has promised them eternal life and he will forever exist to fulfill that promise. That same God who has promised them in time will be their portion in eternity and through its ever securing period will his faithfulness be displayed in brighter and brighter manifestations. This language to every believer is

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
I will not, will not desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never - no never – no never forsake!* [Source: Hymn by Robert Keen, ca. 1787]

Well then in view of this glorious attributes of God may the Christian take up the language of the apostle and say, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ!? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Sermon 212

At Conway December 1823

## Sermon 213 Omniscience of God

[Sermon No. 213, "Omniscience of God," Psalms 139:6, 1823 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 6]

Psalms 139:6

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*

*[Hitchcock argues that if you have a hard time believing in God's omniscience, wait until you are in heaven and can comprehend it.]*

The human mind has sometimes attained to an extent of knowledge that amazes us. But could we mount up to heaven and scan the faculties of an angel or an archangel who for so many thousand years have been learning in the school of heaven man's knowledge would appear like the mere lisplings of childhood. Yet could we go still higher and explore and explore the knowledge of Jehovah - could we turn our eyes into the fountain underived and exhaustless - unmeasured and unmeasurable which lies hid in the divine mind all the knowledge of created beings would be forgotten and we should cry out with the Psalmist, *such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is too high, I cannot attain unto it.* It was in fact a contemplation of the knowledge of God - or rather the omniscience of God - that drew from his lips this confession of his ignorance. And to that attribute of the Deity I invite your attention at this time. Not that I expect to present it in such a light that you will be able to comprehend it. In treating of the Divine attributes let us always remember that we are examining that which is infinite and that of course it is absolutely impossible we should comprehend it.

But a question here arises - can we have any ideas of any belief of that which we cannot comprehend? If not then I had almost said we can have no idea or belief of any thing. But the truth is we may have a perfectly clear notion and exercise an unhesitating belief of certain facts concerning the subject or a being while we are utterly unable to define or comprehend that subject or that being. For instance you believe in the fact that God is underived that is exists without a cause: but you cannot define you cannot comprehend underived existence. And so in regard to many other things in relation to God for example his attributes we may have clear ideas of certain facts concerning them but we cannot fully comprehend one of them. We can understand the fact that God is omniscient - that is that he knows all things: but at the same time we cannot comprehend infinite knowledge.

To the proofs of God's omniscience I now invite your attention. And that proof may be contained in a short compass and therefore I need not make any formal division of the subject.

Suppose a man to have constructed a single wheel and put it in motion. He would be able to estimate by mathematics what would be the effects of that motion. Suppose he were to add a second wheel. Calculation would enable him to estimate the effects of both combined so that before he put them in motion he would know precisely their effects. Let this workman be furnished with materials and a sketch of thought sufficient and he might continue to add to the number of the wheels till they became innumerable and still he would be able to see all their motions and effects. And were we to see such a machine in motion and every wheel properly adjusted so as not to interfere with others and all of them contributing to effect others and all them trying to effect the object of the machine must we not conclude that the artist who constructed it had a perfect knowledge of all its operations and efforts?



Nay though the number of wheels were so great that we could not with our faculties see the utility of them all yet if those whose position and connection we could see were obviously fitted exactly to their place could it not be correct reason to infer that all the others were alike subservient to the end for which the machine was constructed and that the workman had a complete knowledge of them all?

Now my hearers the truth is just such a machine as this is actually before us. It is the universe - and we ourselves are some of the wheels that belong to it. And the number of these wheels is great beyond our powers of calculation. Yet in the ten thousands that we do see the marks of contrivance and design and foresight are obvious and striking and show conclusively that the being who constructed this must have foreseen all the corrections and operations and effects: and we are therefore authorized to conclude that the same is the fact with those whose connection we do not see. Now we all acknowledge that the great artist who constructed this universe is God: and to that knowledge which could thus contrive combine and estimate the effects of these innumerable parts of which the universe is composed to that knowledge we can assign no limits and therefore by legitimate reasoning conclude that it is boundless that it is infinite. This argument is applicable to mind as to matter - to spiritual as well as to material objects. Since the same marks of design and foresight appear in one as in the other.

Again we find the universe in constant motion - all parts of it at the same time. The agency of God is therefore every where exerted at the same moment and this must be deemed infinite knowledge.

This reasoning is amply confirmed by scripture. The text and content are a lively and sublime description of the omniscience and well as omnipresence of God. Let it suffice to repeat a part of it. *O Lord thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and in my uprising: thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou comparest my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue but lo! O Lord, knowest it altogether. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high I cannot attain it.* Jeremiah also is explicit concerning God's omniscience – *Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in the least places that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heavens and earth saith the Lord? The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. Great is the Lord, his undertaking to us is infinite.* In like manner the New Testament says known unto God are all his work from the foundation of the world. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* No matter how deep the darkness - no matter how thick the covering in which the sinner envelops himself all his conduct all his thoughts are naked before God. That the knowledge of God extends to every material object has never been denied by anyone. But there have been those who have denied that God can foresee the determinations of a free agent. For had he foreseen the abuse man would make of his liberty by falling into sin his love of holiness would have induced him to prevent it.

The introduction of moral evil is indeed a subject that always has and always will perplex and baffle human speculations. But to deny any of the attributes of God in order to free ourselves from the difficulty is only to plunge ourselves in a deeper and more intricate labyrinth. Even if we suppose God could not foresee the thoughts and actions of free agents yet all must grant that he did see that those agents would be liable to fall since this is a fact which even human faculties might predict. And if he foresaw this liability why did he not prevent it either by neglecting to create man or by creating him with such a degree of knowledge and with such powerful motives to holiness and such fears of punishment as would have effectually precluded the danger of his falling. God might have done this: yet he neglected to do it and therefore it is not correct to say that God would certainly have prevented the fall of man had he known that it was about to take place. So that by denying omniscience to God in respect to free agents only shifts but does not remove the difficulty.

But the bible expressly asserts that God does know and foreknow all the actions and thoughts of free agents. He inspired the prophets to predict future events that were dependant upon the conduct of man and this certainly required a foreknowledge of the thoughts and actions of free intelligent agents. But if God can foreknow their thoughts and actions in one instance he might in every other instance. Accordingly Solomon addresses God as only knowing the hearts of the children of men. And Christ the second person of the trinity expressly declares, *I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts*. The conclusion then is inevitable that everything that has happened and everything that will happen in the world of spirit as well as the world of matter was foreknown to God from eternity - that is was always in the Divine Mind. It follows that God foresaw the fall of man as well as other events.

Does the enquiry here arise why then did not God prevent the apostasy of man? This question opens to us a field as wide as eternity which no mortal was ere permitted fully to explore: and after all our speculations in answer to this enquiry the most satisfactory solution is to say with Christ, *even so Father for so it seemed good in thy Sight*. What! You will say, did it seem good in the sight of God that sin should exist? Certainly: or why did he suffer it? That he permitted its existence is certain - that he foresaw it would exist is certain and that he has power to prevent it is certain. Upon the whole then it must have appeared desirable to God that sin should exist. We see only a very small part of this subject. There maybe ten thousand bearings of it altogether out of our sight yet of the greatest importance. And although from what we see and feel of sin we should be led to conclude its introduction into the world as the most undesirable of all events yet to the eye of God it may present itself in a very different light.

He may discern benefits to the universe from man's sinfulness man vastly greater than the evils it brings upon our race dreadful as those evils are. Thus much is certain that it can never be proved that God was obliged either by justice or benevolence to prevent the existence of sin because it can never be proved that its existence will on the whole be a detriment to the universe. On this subject however I will not enlarge but only remark that no reasonable man should expect (in this place: as it will be required to be taken up again in considering other parts of the divine character. But do not expect my hearers) that all the difficulties attending the introduction of moral evil into the universe be cleared up. This is what may be called an ultimate fact in the empire of God and the wisest of men have here found their wisdom to be little better than folly.

Having as I trust established the doctrine of God's Omniscience I close with a few remarks.

First if God be omniscient then will all events be foreknown by him.

This position has already been incidentally brought forward but I wish for a particular reason to make it again prominent. In the divine mind all events are in a sense present and therefore with him to know anything is the same as to foreknow it. The ideas of successive existence are inapplicable to him. And to suppose that when God created the universe he did not foreknow all the events that would occur and in it is to suppose his knowledge to be limited. But his omniscience has been proved and none will deny it unless he denies God's existence; and since foreknowledge is a part of omniscience it would seem no one can deny or doubt this. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*. Every event in the material world every event in the intellectual world - all our thoughts words desires motives creations and whatever pertains to us must have been present in the divine mind when he looked on the creation and pronounced it good.

But in the second place I would enquire whether it is possible for the human mind to conceive of an event as foreknown without supposing that it also predetermined? By being predetermined I mean that it is so fixed by the will of God that it cannot happen otherwise then he foresees it will happen. And if it be not so fixed as it is possible he should certainly foreknow it? You can foretell with a great degree of probability that the sun will rise tomorrow because it has risen every day for six thousand years: but you cannot be certain that tomorrow will not be an exception because you have no power to render the fact of it as rising certain. Did you possess this power you might be certain that the fact would occur: but you could not be infallibly sure that it would take place until you have exercised that power and made its existence absolutely certain. So God cannot be absolutely certain or sure of the existence of future events until he had first fixed or determined them beyond the possibility of alteration or failure. If they were not thus fixed absolutely he might regard it probable that such and such events would take place in the universe but he could not absolutely foreknow them. Here then I ask again my hearers whether you can conceive it possible that God should foreknow all things without supposing also that he has fixed or determined all things? Is it not as easy to conceive of God determining all things without foreknowing them as to conceive of his foreknowing all things without determining them? Every candid man who has thought on this subject must say that he cannot separate the idea of foreknowledge from that of predetermination. But all men believe in the foreknowledge of God: yet very many reject the idea that he predetermines all things. And why this inconsistency? They fancy they see more difficulties in predestination and foreknowledge. But the proof of the one is just as strong as the proof of the other: nay the human mind cannot conceive the existence of one without the existence of the other. Be consistent then my hearers: and if you deny that God has predetermined every event deny also that he fore knows every event. Does it startle you to think of denying that God is omniscient? Then believe his omniscience and predetermination and wait for the solution of your difficulties till you enter eternity.

In the third place if God be Omniscient how deep ought to be our repentance!

Has seen all our sins through all our days. He was present to witness every sinful action. He was present to hear every sinful word. He was present to know every sinful thought. His eye, his ears, his consciousness have been the companions of our journeys of our retirement of our downsitting and our uprising. And yet we have dared to sin with those pure eyes turned full upon us flashing indignation. Be ashamed our souls! Be humbled our hearts! That we have thus insulted the holy eternal omniscient and omnipotent God!

Fourthly what a lesson of humility and are we taught by the omniscience of God.

Talk no more of human learning – admire human genius and talents and knowledge no more! They disappear in the presence of God. Call human wisdom ignorance – and the pride of learning call it madness!

Fifthly how ought the omniscience of God to make hypocrites tremble!

How do they exult when their secret sins have eluded the vigilance of human eyes! That religious hypocrite - how does he strive by all the external marks of piety to induce a belief in his fellow men that he is a saint – but God tears away the veil and sees the abominable wickedness of his heart. Thou hardhearted avaricious worldling! God penetrates all the dark designs – he digs into all thy secret purposes of fraud and oppression. Thou vile slanderer! Think not that your vile mean efforts to blacken the character of your neighbors - to turn friend against friend - to disturb the peace of society and to reduce others as low as yourself think not that your secret stabs upon the reputations of others are

disregarded by an omniscient God. Thou slave to sensuality! Remember when you wallow in the mire of pollution that God's eyes is turned full upon you - when in the darkness of midnight you engage in your beastly pleasures secured by bars and bolts and darkness from the eyes of men - forget not that to God, *the darkness and the light are both alike*.

Finally my brethren from the subject discussed we derive an effectual charm against sin.

This charm I now present you and entreat you to carry it home with you this day. Engrave on your memories this motto: *God seeth me*. And you need not fear the world the flesh or the devil. Wherever you are whatever engaged let this thought be distinctly in your mind. *God seeth me*. Think of him as actually present with you as overseeing in every thing you do and everything that passes within you. Make it real to yourselves that the eternal holy almighty God is your companion in every place - and then what temptation can overcome you - what ungodly passion will you dare to let loose - what evil thought will you dare to indulge - what unholy feeling will you dare to harbour in your bosom! *God seeth me! God seeth me!* O that I had the pen of iron and the point of a diamond which Gabriel wields and I would write this sentence upon each one of your foreheads - I would write it upon your memories - I would write it upon your hearts. Come thou Divine Spirit - come and write it upon each one of our souls in letters of fire.

Delivered

At Conway December 1823

At Whately April 1824

At Amherst College August 1832

At Leverett July 1838

At Amherst College June 1847

## Sermon 214 Justice of God

[Sermon No. 214, "Justice of God," Psalms 89:14, 1824 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 7]

Psalms 89:14

*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*

The full force of this text is not probably realized by readers in general on account of a degree of obscurity that rests upon the word *habitation*. It removes every difficulty at once to substitute the word *basis*: and this answers more nearly to the original and of course is the more proper. If we say in addressing God, *justice and judgment are the basis of thy throne*, we immediately perceive that the Psalmist represents the throne of God as resting upon justice and judgment as its foundation. Thus an impressive idea of the perfect justice of God is conveyed to the mind. We have beheld this attribute upholding the very throne of God and without which it could not stand. To the proof and illustration of this attribute the attention of this audience is now requested.

I shall first explain what is meant by the Justice of God.

Secondly exhibit the proofs that it is one of his attributes.

And thirdly refer to some of the most striking exhibitions of that attribute in the Divine Government.

First I am to explain the meaning of the Justice of God.

The term justice is employed with considerable variety of signification. When used in relation to man it sometimes signifies nothing more than an equal exchange of benefits - that is the exchange one thing for another of the same value: this sort of justice is termed *commutative* and applies to all those cases in which property is concerned. And in all bargains in the payment of debts and fulfillment of contracts strict commutative justice is done only when an exact equivalent is made.

Again: justice implies an equal distribution of rewards and punishments: or the treatment of cheated beings exactly according to their personal merits. This is called *distributive justice*. This kind of justice is the foundation of human laws and ought to be the guide of civil magistrates.

In a still more extensive sense justice implies doing that in all cases which is right upon the whole or that which best promotes the general good. This is sometimes termed *general justice*.

The first sort of justice here mentioned that is commutative justice or an equal exchange of benefits cannot with propriety be applied to God at all since he is the author of every benefit and creatures cannot make him any equivalent return. The second kind that is distributive justice or treating created beings according to their personal merit is the standard by which God has declared he will finally judge the world. And the third sort of justice or doing that which best promotes the good of the universe is eminently applicable to Jehovah.

This distribution of justice into different varieties may seem perplexing to the mind and not have upon it

the oneness of impression that is desirable in regard to the Divine Attributes. Permit me therefore to present the subject in a somewhat different light.

Among all men there exists a certain feeling of approbation of particular conduct and motives and a feeling of disapprobation of other particular motives and conduct. We are led by our very nature to regard certain courses of conduct as just or morally right in given circumstances and other courses of conduct as unjust or morally wrong - the one we regard as punishable - the other as deserving of approbation and reward. It is true the moral sense of men may be much blunted by corrupt principles or practices so that they often put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter: and we accordingly find that the moral discernment of some men is vastly more acute than that of others. But still there is in all a general resemblance in their apprehensions and feelings concerning right and wrong. Now the justice of God is nothing more than the moral approbation or disapprobation as it exists in the Divine Nature. Our notions of God's justice then are nothing more than those feelings we possess concerning right and wrong extended to the Deity - and adapted to his infinite nature and peculiar relation to other beings and thus developed in unclouded perfection. The justice of God may then be defined to be that constant disposition that exists within him to do that which is perfectly right in every instance and towards all beings.

This disposition leads him to do that which is right in relation to himself. It has prompted him to exhibit before the creatures he has made his own character as one in every respect perfect and lovely and demands the supreme affection of all intelligent beings for that character. It has led him to exhibit before the universe that eternal rule of rectitude by which his own conduct has always been directed and to which most reasonably therefore he demands a perfect conformity in his creatures. He would be unjust to himself were he not to maintain the honour of that law even though it cost him the sacrifice of this whole universe.

Again God does that which is right towards the creatures he has made and is thus perfectly just towards them. The glorious exhibition of his character which he has made is the highest active of justice he can render them. To present his holy law before them so distinctly that they cannot misapprehend it is another act of justice. When this law with all its promises and all its threatenings is thus presented before rational beings God deals with them strictly according to the principles of distributive justice that is he punishes or rewards them just according to their conformity to this law or their violations of it.

In the second place I am to prove that perfect justice is an attribute of God.

It must be acknowledged that the justice of God does not shine forth so clearly in the volume of nature as in the volume of revelation. The fact cannot be doubted that individuals in this life are not usually rewarded or punished precisely according to their deserts. It is necessary to call in the aid of a future state of retribution in order fully to justify the ways of God to man. Although earnestly wished for by reason still has never been so fairly established by her researchers as to form a ground of demonstrative argument for God's justice. Reason however suggests many things that render God's justice highly probable.

1. God's feelings towards nations appears to be on the principle of distributive justice. We these have become corrupt they have uniformly felt the avenging Law of a just God laying low their prosperity and perhaps utterly striking them from the list of nations. And when they have been virtuous and humble they have experienced the divine blessing. However long these punishments and these rewards have been delayed they have not ultimately failed. If we examine the records of history we shall certainly

perceive greater evidence of the justice of God exhibited towards nations than towards individuals: and as nations will exist as such only in this world this as we might expect it if God were a being of perfect justice.

2. If God be infinitely benevolent he must be perfectly just.

The idea of infinite benevolence includes that of perfect justice. For God to exercise the least injustice towards any being he would not be benevolent but cruel towards that being. Whoever allows of God's benevolence therefore must admit his justice. All those arguments then which evince God to be benevolent are equally forcible in showing him to be just. These arguments however have so recently been presented before you better reflection is unnecessary.

3. The perfect justice of God is completely established by the holy scriptures.

I have already remarked upon the clear and impressive manner in which the text presents this attribute. It is repeated in the 97 Psalm with an instructive addition - *Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* The word *righteousness* in this place is the same in the original as in the text translated *justice*. Indeed the two words are often used in the scriptures as synonymous. By the expression *clouds and darkness are round about him* an allusion is doubtless made to those mysterious providences in which God often moves and to that unequal distribution of good and evil which seems to the eye of reason to cast a blot upon the justice of God. In another Psalm it is said, *They throne to God is forever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.* In another: *The Lord is righteous (or just) in all his ways and holy in all his works.* Moses also says of God, *He is the rock his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; of God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.* And it is a part of the song of Moses and the Lamb on Mount Zion above *just and true are thy ways thou king of saints.*

The justice of God is also clearly evinced by other things contained in the bible besides direct assertion. Many striking instances of the display of that attribute are recorded which will be particularized under the last head of this discourse. The fact also that his law requires all men to be just if they would gain his favour evinces clearly enough that he must be just: for otherwise it would not be possible for him to love justice in his creatures. That law points us to a day of final judgment whose decisions will be regulated by the strictest justice and if we believe this will take place we cannot refuse to admit justice to be one of the characteristics of the judge. But to dwell no longer on a point acknowledged theoretically at least by all who acknowledge the bible to be inspired I proceed

Thirdly to present some of the most striking displays of the justice of God that have been or will be made so far as we know in the Divine government. This will serve not only to confirm the existence of justice in God but also I trust to make a salutary practical impression of this truth upon our hearts.

The first exhibition of Divine justice of which we have any account was made in unknown ages past when the rebel angels stirred up revolt and war in heaven. The guilty blow which they aimed at the throne of God recoiled upon their heads with tenfold fury speeded by the thunderbolts of divine justice. The crystal gates of heaven opened wide to pour forth into the dark and awful gulph that yawned beneath the apostate wretches who had madly defied omnipotence.

*The monstrous site*

*Struck them with horror backward but far worse*

*Urged them behind: headlong themselves they threw  
Down from the verge of heaven; eternal wrath  
Burnt after them to the bottomless pit. [Source: Paradise Lost, John Milton, 1667]*

The next exhibition of divine justice on record was made in the garden of Eden. The fatal apple was eaten and the crown of glory fell from the brow of man. The curse of a broken law urged him out of Paradise and when he looked back amid the thorns that had sprung up around him and the pains and sorrows he began to feel to that happy spot there he saw waving the glittering two-edged sword of divine justice barring forever his readmittance. The decree of banishment and misery and death temporal spiritual and eternal had gone forth irrevocably: in the unborn millions of men amid the pains and miseries that beset must look back ever to the end of time and admire and tremble at the strictness and unbending severity of the justice of God.

The world had now fallen under the displeasure of God: and as we descend along the periods of its history we find numerous instances in which the wrath of God was signally displayed to punish the daringly guilty. Had not God thus interposed to stop the inundating flood of man's dreadful wickedness we know not but the history of the earth would have exhibited as unalleviated a picture of crime as the very regions of despair. But when the wickedness of man became great in the earth the deluge rose at the Almighty's bidding and engulfed a guilty world in one common ruin.

Men however as the earth was repeopled forgot the mementos of divine justice with which they were surrounded. A little further down in the history we find the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah rising to heaven and calling aloud for vengeance. And the fire and the brimstone were poured forth from the windows of heaven burying in desolation the cities of the plain: and they are set forth *as an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*.

Following in imagination the Israelites in their forty years march through the deserts of Arabia. Signal was that art of Divine justice which flashed from the cloudy pillars that followed the Hebrews and buried in the waves of the Red Sea the tens of thousands of Pharaoh madly fighting against God. At the foot of Sinai where in the immediate and visible presence of God the Israelites reared and worshipped the golden calf God put the sword of his justice into the hands of the Levites and 3000 fell before it. View them again a short time afterwards loathing the manna God daily sent them and receiving the quails and with them a raging pestilence a fearful token of the wrath of God. See too the earth opening and swallowing up 14,000 of them who joined in the rebellion of Korah. Again view the fiery serpents crawling among them and with their poisonous fangs executing the judgment of God. See also the carcasses of 24,000 of these Israelites strewn the ground because they joined in the idolatries and licentiousness of Baal Peor. And finally behold a display of divine justice in God's destroying the whole generation that went out of Egypt for their perverseness.

The history of the Jews from the period of their settlement in Judea to the time of Christ afford also very many instances of the special manifestations of the justice of God in the punishment of offenders. But the woes that came upon Jerusalem and the whole nation soon after the time of Christ as a punishment for their rejection and crucifixion of the Lord of glory is the most signal instance on record perhaps of the punishment of a nation of offenders: and that nation scattered and peeled in every part of the earth exhibit to us an appalling memento of the divine displeasure against those who reject a Saviour.

In the incarnation sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ there was exhibited before the universe the most glorious display of the justice of God. To exhibit his justice in the sight of the universe God



declares to have been the express object for which he yielded up his Son to the ignominy of the cross. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness (or justice) for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* After man had sinned God could not pardon him without an atonement unless he were to be and unjust to his law whose penalty was inevitable death unless he were unjust to his kingdom whom he governed by that law and unless he were unjust to himself by making a law which he neglected to enforce. Man then must suffer the fearful penalty of the law he has violated unless a substitute magnify that law and make it honourable – unless God make the soul of that substitute *an offering for sin* unless he submit to be made a curse for man and give his life a ransom for many. The substitute is found and suffers the just for the unjust. And none the justice of God in the pardon of man shines forth in unclouded glory - in the same as if a man had actually suffered his eternal wrath. *Mercy and truth are met together righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* With what exalted views of the purity and inflexibility of God's justice does so great a sacrifice inspire us: and how it ought to awaken the deepest emotions of gratitude in the hearts of our lost race! No wonder that into such a plan *angels desire to look.*

If we now turn our eyes upon the future an awful display of the justice of God rises in prospect. The day is distinctly announced in the bible in which all the past and the future generations of men will stand before the Son of Man when with the wand of justice he will divide the righteous from the wicked as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. That will be a day in which Justice will award the destinies of man. It is the awful voice of justice which loud as ten thousand thunders issues from the tribunal piercing through the hearts of the unnumbered multitudes on the left hand and filling all hell with the dreadful echo and saying *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* Depart they must terrible as is the burning lake before them: for the sword of almighty justice urges them behind. Headlong they plunge amid the billions of eternal wrath and justice closes upon them the everlasting gates and sets her seal thereon never to be broken. Around those walls justice plants her triple and eternal God guard and in sight of the universe the smokes of the torments of the wicked ascend forever and ever – a fearful memento of the justice of God!

The subject will be close with a few remarks.

In the first place I remark that to love the justice of God is one test of Christian character.

The really penitent soul has no wish to rob God of this attribute: on the contrary he sees with what a glory it invests the Divine Character and how unfit to rule the universe would be a being without it. The real Christian rejoices to be in the hands of a just God: he rejoices because he believes himself not to have on his own righteousness but the righteousness of Christ and he knows that *God can be just while he justifies the believer in Jesus.* In Christ he finds security pardon and peace. But if God had not been just such a Saviour would not have been provided and this man must have depended on the poor security of his own righteousness.

Secondly, to object to or lower down the justice of God is a mark of an impenitent heart.

The unrenewed heart endeavours to persuade itself that God is too merciful to be very severe toward such weak beings as men and that he will relax a little in their favour. Such a man does not love to hear the justice of God dwelt upon and unfolded. To preach God's justice is in his view to preach terror. He never meditates with any pleasure as a Christian does upon God's justice. He keeps that attribute out of sight as much as possible by covering it up with his benevolence and mercy: he cannot believe it possible

that God should punish eternally any of his creatures. And why can he not believe it? Because he knows that he has never taken the Gospel method of reconciliation to God and that therefore if the doctrine of eternal punishments be true he is one that must suffer it. He denies or lowers down the justice of God because that is directly opposed to his pride and wickedness and because if God be strictly just he must be punished. If therefore my hearers any of you find within you a disposition to doubt the perfect justice of God - if you do not see the glory of that attribute - if you endeavour to persuade yourselves that the everlasting destruction of the wicked is not certain and that God will soften the demands of his law you have great reason to fear that your hearts do not love the divine character.

Finally in how alarming a situation does the justice of God exhibit those who have never been reconciled to God by the atonement of Christ.

Their condition is just this. They have broken the law of God. The penalty of that law is everlasting misery. They they have refused and neglected to comply with the only terms God has ever made to escape that penalty: and therefore they are constantly exposed to it. They stand exposed naked to the justice of God. It is not possible for them to escape that eternal punishment which justice requires for their sins except they repent. And it is nothing but the mere mercy of God that delays the stroke of justice another moment.

If this be true my impenitent friends how fearful is your case. And that it is true is beyond all doubt. I believe it is firmly as I do my existence that if you have not repented of your sins and exercised faith in Christ you are constantly exposed to suffer the eternal agonies of hell. And unless you do repent it is no more possible for you to be saved than it is for God himself to become unjust. But from this alarming state do but look up to see how wide the door of heaven is thrown open. The cross of Christ is the ladder by which you can ascend to heaven. The shafts of divine justice pass harmless by you. Take hold of this and you are as safe as the arm and promise and oath of Jehovah can make you.

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## Sermon 215 Delineation of Character in the Bible a Proof of its Divinity

[Sermon No. 215, "Delineation of Character in the Bible a Proof of its Divinity," II Timothy 3:16, 1824 Jun, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 7]

II Timothy 3:16

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God.*

*[Insert on pages 6-8 includes a long quote of Rousseau comparing Socrates and Christ. It looks like it is in Orra's hand. Also see on page 8 what appear to be announcements, possibly also written by Orra Hitchcock.]*

In order to fully appreciate the necessity of a revelation we must transport ourselves back in imagination to the days that preceded the advent of a Saviour and to the countries where no servants of God had ever proclaimed his will. In every law except Judeo men had fallen into gross idolatry and superstition. Their gods and goddesses were multiplied without end and even vices and crimes were despised. Accompanying this polytheism the most degrading superstition reigned and the manners of the great mass of the people were gross and sensual in the extreme. There was no fear of God before their eyes and self-interest was the grand spring of every effort. Not even the common principles of morality had much influence over the man of the people or were known to them with any degree of certainty or correctness. A dark cloud hung over futurity and the miserable heathen after spending a few years of sin and misery here died almost without the hope of existence beyond the grave. Whether God would forgive the sinner or how he would forgive him were among the things that were unknown.

But did not the philosopher make many noble discoveries concerning the being of God and other moral and religious truths? Did not the arts and sciences flourish extensively in Greece and Rome - did not the national glory fill the world and are not some of the writings of their illustrious citizens read even at this day with eagerness as models of style and rich in fine sentiments?. All this is true and it seems to have been providential that in those nations previous to the promulgation of the Gospel learning and refinement should have risen so high that the total inadequacy of philosophy and unassisted reason to remedy the evils of the world and guide men into the paths of virtue and holiness might be made manifest. In Greece and Rome science and arts did their utmost to effect these objects: but their failure was complete and striking. Even the philosophers themselves did not pretend to practice those moral principles they so beautifully recommended to others: nay it is a notorious fact that the very best of them indulged in the most brutal vices. And as for idolatry none of them made any efforts to root it out among the common people: on the contrary whatever might have been their own belief they implicitly conformed to the national idolatrous religion and recommended to others to do the same. Who among them was wiser or more virtuous than Socrates? Yet Socrates among the last acts of his life directed his surviving disciples to offer up for him a fowl which he had vowed to sacrifice to the god Esculapiens. Nay now it happens that we have the testimony of Socrates himself (and whose testimony can be better than his) to the total inadequacy of philosophy for the reformation of mankind. *You may even give over said he to his disciples all hopes of amending mens' manners for the future unless God be pleased to send you some other person to instruct you.* This declaration sparks volumes on this subject. We here see an

enlightened heathen stored with all the knowledge and wisdom of Greece and after the efforts of a whole life to make men virtuous through the influence of philosophical principles settling down in despair of success and turning his thoughts to heaven as the only source from whence an adequate remedy could come. We see him looking forward with a feeble hope to the time when God should please to make a revelation of his will and send some one to instruct mankind in the knowledge of their duty and to enforce it by motives more powerful than any that could be brought from the storehouse of reason. Those who enjoy the light of the gospel may taketh about the sufficiency of reason and philosophy to lead men in the ways of virtue and holiness: but they have in a gospel land no just conceptions of the depth of heathen darkness. Let them see the keen and lofty spirit of Socrates after striving for years to burst the prison walls that surrounded him sinking at length into the despairing conclusion that unless God please to give a revelation there is no hope of amending essentially the human heart and human conduct - let them reflect on this and confess their ignorance. How eagerly and gladly would Socrates have seized upon any volume that bore on its face the marks of a revelation. Let them with the like interest set down and partially impartially to an examination of the evidence of a divine original which the holy scriptures carry with them.

I have recently attempted to set before this audience the evidence of the existence and the nature of the attributes of Jehovah: and the next grand question that engages the attention of the human mind is whether that God has ever specially revealed himself to his creatures. In looking over the whole world we find only one volume that bears about it marks of a heavenly origin. There are several indeed that claim to have God for their author. But they carry the evidence of being counterfeit on their face. But the Bible demands attention and its claims a discussion. To prove that it was given by inspiration of God is my object in this and a number of subsequent discourses which by divine permission I hope to be enabled to prepare and present occasionally from this desk. The subject of the authenticity of the holy scriptures is too extensive to be even touched profitably upon in a single sermon. Indeed fully to exhibit it would demand more than one volume.

The evidences of the inspiration of scripture have usually been divided into two classes - internal and external. The internal proofs are those which result from an examination of the contents of the bible: the external are those which result from the fulfillment of prophecy and its own and collateral historical testimony. I confine my attention this morning to the first of these viz. the internal evidence - and even to a small portion of this. It is important such a subject where the proofs are numerous and often mutually dependant that we adopt some clear arrangement of these evidences or we shall soon become confused and incapable of balancing them. I shall as already remarked arrange the evidences of revelation under two general classes - internal and external: and at this time I propose to glance at this time only at a particular branch of the first of these divisions - I assert that the delineation of character contained in the scriptures furnishes proof that they are from God.

It will simplify this enquiry to confine our attention in the whole course of the argument to the New Testament. For in the old testament are many things which at this distance of time and with our difficulties of understanding them it would require longer time to explain and unravel. And if the divinity of the New Testament be proven the divinity of the Old Testament follows of course since the writers of the new repeatedly appeal to the old as of divine authority. The enquiry now is then what is there in the delineation of character in the New Testament that shows it to be a superhuman production?

1. Let us consider the character of God.

Nothing is more difficult as is well known to every one who has attempted to delineate a particular

character than to preserve a consistency and correctness in the description. And in proportion to the dignity of that character does the difficulty increase: and it attains its highest pitch when Jehovah the greatest of all beings is to be described. But look into the Bible and see what wonderful success attended the attempts of the writers of that book to do this. What other writer who has done this has not introduced corporeal resemblances to delineate the nature of God - and given some representations of his attributes and conduct that seemed unbecoming. But search the scriptures and how elevated from every allusion to matter are all its descriptions of his nature? How holy and glorious merciful and just does his character every where appear and how perfectly becoming such a Being are all his actions. Whether he is presented as ruling the universe - upholding his creatures or devising and executing the astonishing plan of redemption. In almost every page - in almost every verse something affecting the character of God is introduced and yet there is no contradiction no inconsistency - although penned by numerous writers evidently of very different tastes and dispositions.

And who were the men who have been thus successful in this most difficult of all attempts. Were they the learned philosophers of Greece and Rome? No: the illiterate fishermen of Galilee. Surely then they must have spoken as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Compare for a moment the description of God as given by these illiterate Galileans with the very best descriptions of any deity you can find in the whole circle of Greek and Roman literature: and how absolutely contemptible the latter in comparison with the former. How consistent grand and holy the former! How low and debasing and abominable the latter! And whence this difference if it be not owing to the superintendence in the latter case of God himself. This supposition solves at once every difficulty and no other will do it.

## 2. Let us look at the character of Christ as given in the New Testament.

The sacred writers describe him as a perfect and a sinless character. In every other writer on earth there is to be found nothing likely this. Nor can his character as given by the four evangelists be mistaken for fiction. These are numberless marks of originality about it that demonstrate that what is recorded of Christ in the New Testament was actually said and done and suffered by him. He is described in a great variety of circumstances public and private and many of them most trying and difficult. Yet the bitterest enemy of the Gospel never yet found in the evangelistic history of his conduct in these circumstances anything that disproved the idea that he was perfect and sinless. It is also a most remarkable fact that from beginning to end none of the four evangelists ever pass a panegyric upon their master. They certainly loved their Lord and Saviour: they have told us so. Yet they express no pity for his sufferings no invectives against his murderers - nor extol any of his deeds of benevolence. All about them appears to be perfect fairness and calmness. Nothing like this can be found in any human biography. The character of Christ then as given by the evangelists is made up not of imaginary descriptions but of a multitude of plain unvarnished facts. Yet no man will deny that that character is a perfect one - a sinless one. Mere human wisdom never could have done this - certainly the unlettered men of Galilee could not have done it. They must have been under the inspiration of heaven.

*[An additional page has been inserted into the manuscript at this point (pages 6-8 of the scanned document) that may have been a later addition to the sermon. It has been placed at the end of this transcription.]*

There was another difficulty in this delineation of Christ's character. While he is represented as a man - with the feelings and the passions of a man he is also described as he *who in the beginning was with*

*God and who was God.* To the humility of a man they must therefore be added the dignity and conscious superiority of one who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. And who will say that in this also the evangelists have not succeeded most wonderfully not by ingenious efforts of imagination but by a simple exhibition of facts. Christ every where acts and speaks with all the dignity and authority of the Son of God blended with all the mildness and kindness and sympathy of the man of sorrows.

Thirdly. Let us consider the delineation of the human character as given in the New Testament.

The wisest observers of human nature have ever regarded it as abounding in paradoxes. And who does not feel the justness of the poets antithesis!

*How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,  
How complicate, how wonderful is man!  
Distinguished link in beings and must chain!  
Midway from nothing to the Deity!  
A beam ethereal sully'd and absorbt  
Though sully'd, and dishonoured, still divine!  
Dim miniature of greatness absolute!  
An heir of glory! A frail child of dust!  
Helpless immortal! insect infinite!  
A worm! a god!*

[Source: Poem by Edward Young, 1742]

Made up of qualities so apparently contradictory a full and correct description of human nature was never given till it was presented in the bible. Writers indeed had described some particular feature of the race with tolerable precision. But it remained to the sacred writers to seize upon the grand elements of the human heart and so to lay open its character and motives that all should acknowledge the correctness of the picture. This is done in the bible. The description there given whether in Genesis or Revelation or any intervening book answers precisely to the experience of man in every successive age. The grand element which the writers of the bible seized upon as a comprehensive summary of the human character in a natural state is the original and universal depravity of the heart. When Moses said that *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth* he put into the hands of all succeeding generations a clue for understanding themselves and the whole race. When Jeremiah said, *the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*, he correctly described every man's original character from the beginning to the end of time: and when Paul said, *the carnal mind is enmity against God*, he reiterated the same sentiment with a powerful emphasis. All the histories in the Old and New Testaments of evil deeds is but an illustration of this sentiment. And the millions in succeeding ages who have been brought to have correct apprehensions of themselves have found their hearts precisely to correspond to this description - so that the very language used by Moses and Job and David and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Paul and John concerning their hearts has been used with a deep impression of its truth by every succeeding believer. All have found within them those hearts desperately wicked in which dwelleth no good thing of which believers 3 and 5 and 5000 years ago complained and that they were governed by that same selfishness which has so long filled the world with oppression and misery.

If the character of man by nature is thus correctly described in the bible so also is the character of the believer alike accurately exhibited. The same sense of unworthiness and of the need of an atonement - the same inward struggle between the old and the new man the same alternation of hopes and fears and the same hatred of sin which are so clearly set forth in the sacred record have been found invariably to attend a converted state: and hence these very words which patriarchs prophets and apostles

employed thousands of years ago have been found in every successive age the most appropriate that could be used to describe the heart of the believer.

But how does it happen that the writers of the New Testament (and I might ask the same in regard to the old) have thus solved a problem which completely baffled the skill of learned philosophers viz. a description of the human heart that should apply in every age and every place? It was not their learning that enabled them to do it for they were most of them ignorant in human learning: it was not sagacity for they were unlettered men. But it must have been the Spirit of God moving upon their hearts. It must have been the wisdom that is from above that was able thus wonderfully to guide them aright.

Now my hearers just look back upon the argument and compare the skill of the evangelist and the delineation of the Divine and human characters with that of the united learning and wisdom of antiquity and of the whole world. Grant that the philosophers had some correct ideas of God and of themselves. Yet every truth was mingled with at least ten errors. But in Scriptures no errors are discoverable on the subject. Every line of the exhibition of the divine and human characters is such as to commend itself to the reception of every unprejudiced man. I am amazed that a few Galilean fishermen should thus have outstripped the learning of centuries - and I cannot but allow that which they maintain that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. I leave the infidel to account for the facts if he can without such an admission.

Probably however my hearers none of you doubt the inspiration of the holy scriptures. Then let this view of a single branch of evidence of that inspiration establish your faith yet more firmly in the truth of scripture: and remember that this is but one argument among a multitude for the divinity of that sacred book. Remember too that there is such a thing as spectatively acknowledging the truth of scripture and yet living as if it were not true. Remember that such neglect is more offensive to God than infidelity itself. Boast not of your belief in scripture unless you have thereby been led to give your heart to God. Forget not that to whom much is given of him much will be required and that the bible will be a millstone around the necks of those who acknowledge to truth and yet in works deny it.

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*[Insertion from pages 6-8]*

But I have at hand a representation of Christ's character as given by the sacred writers in the language of a distinguished writer of modern times: and the passage addressed to a friend is too beautiful to be withheld -

*[The following is in a different handwriting, possibly that of Orra Hitchcock?]*

*I will confess to you, says he, that the majesty of the scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction: how mean, how contemptible are they compared with the scripture! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage, whose history it contains, should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious secretary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Whence is the man, whence the philosopher, who could so live and so die, without weakness and without ostentation? When*

*Plato described his imaginary good man with all the shame of guilt yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ: for the resemblance was so striking that all the christian fathers perceived.*

*What prepossession, what blindness must it be to compare Socrates, the son of Sophronieus to (Jesus) the Son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion is there between them! Socrates dying without pains or ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; O if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was anything more than a vain sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory of morals. Others, however, had before put them in practice; he had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precept. But where could Jesus learn among his competitors, that pure and sublime morality, of which he only hath given us precept and preamble? The death of Socrates, peaceably philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for; that of Jesus, expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted and accuse by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, in viewing the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it, but Jesus in the midst of excruciating torture prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes! if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God. Shall we suppose this evangelical history a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction; on the contrary the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty, without obviating it: it is more inconceivable, that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the gospel, the marks of whose truths are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero!*

[Source: Rousseau, Vol. 5, pp. 215-218]

*[Edward's handwriting resumes here.]*

And who my hearers do you imagine to be the author of this eloquent panegyric upon Christ and the Scriptures. It was no other than Rosseau one of the bitterest and vilest of infidels - who in the very next sentence declares that notwithstanding all he had said in its praise he *could not believe the gospel*. This passage is surely a striking instance of the power of truth upon the understanding of a corrupt man; while on the other hand it is a no less striking instance of the power of a wicked heart in resisting the convictions of the understanding. Let us see to it that our hearts do not thus blind us against the truths of the gospel.

*[These notes in Edward's handwriting were added across the bottom of the inserted page; they appear to be a list of announcements of church and community events.]*

Monthly concert tomorrow evening at early candle lighting -

Franklin Education Society Tuesday at Ashfield -

Young Men's Society -

Female Society for promoting Christianity

The Dorcas and Lent Societies and Grace Society and Social Benevolence Society will meet on Wednesday - Public exercises at 3 o'clock

Soc. Prom. Christianity and Soc. Benevolent Society meet at this place at two o'clock.

Trust society meets immediately after public exercises at this place.

Young men's society at the same time and place.

Lent and Dorcas Soc. at Mr. John Howland same time.



Delivered

At Conway June 1824

At Amherst College December 1830

## Sermon 216 Wisdom of God

[Sermon No. 216, "Wisdom of God," Romans 11:33, 1824 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 7]

Romans 11:33

*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

*[Includes a discussion of perfection of universe, stars, planets, etc. and of nature, plant and animal adaptations.]*

With the truth of God discussed the last sabbath I closed my proposed view may of what may be denominated the simple attributes of God. There are however one or two others that may be called compound attributes that is consisting of the union of two or more simple attributes that deserve attention on account of their frequent occurrence in the Scriptures and in conversation. One of them is the wisdom of God: to a consideration of which I now invite your attention.

The term wisdom is used in a variety of senses not only in Scripture but in common language. It sometimes means merely extensive knowledge as Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. It sometimes means quickness of invention and dexterity in the works of art as Bezaleel and Aholiab are said to have been filled *with wisdom to devise cunning works, to work in gold and in silver and in brass*. It means also that cunning craftiness whereby men bring about their designs; as Pharaoh conducted wisely in oppressing the Hebrews. It means also mere animal instinct - as the ostrich is said to be devoid of wisdom. It frequently also is put for real godliness of heart and indeed to fear and love God is the highest wisdom. Finally it means a knowledge to discern and a disposition to choose the best ends and the best means for their accomplishment. In this last sense alone is wisdom strictly applicable to God. It is obviously compounded of his omniscience which enables him to discern the best ends and means and of his benevolence that disposes him to choose them.

The wisdom of God is infinite. This is implied in the text. The apostle had been extensively contemplating the sovereign election of some nations and individuals while others were left and sensible that the proud heart of man would not be content to yield without a struggle to a doctrine so uncongenial to its feelings - being deeply sensible too how far removed was the doctrine from the utmost stretch of human intellect he suddenly breaks forth into the glorious apostrophe of the text, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!* They could not be fathomed by human faculties and therefore we have a right to conclude them infinite.

In pursuing this subject I shall briefly recall to your notice the most striking mark of God's wisdom that are presented to our contemplation in the kingdoms of nature and of grace.

### 1. In the kingdom of nature

One of the most striking changes that occurs to our notice is the uniform revolution of day and night.

These vicissitudes correspond so exactly with the necessities of man giving him an opportunity to pursue his lawful and necessary employments by day and to take the rest which his exhausted frame soon needs at night that they indicate the wisdom of the Creator. It is also a fact worthy of notice that while there is great inequality in the length of the day and the night in different parts of the globe yet such is the position of its axis in the course of the year every part of the earth surface enjoys the same length of day and night. Nor is it undeserving of reproach that such is the power of the atmosphere to reflect rays of light that we enjoy the mild lustre of the twilight instead of the instantaneous change from darkness to light which would probably soon destroy our organs.

The same wisdom which is seen in the diurnal revolution of the earth is exhibited in the annual vicissitudes of the seasons. That same oblique position of the earth's axis that is made to produce an inequality in the lengths of days and night produces also the changes of summer and winter spring and autumn. To detail all the blessings which result from this peculiar condition of things - that is from the seasons would demand more time than can be bestowed upon the subject. We often indeed murmur at the variety in the seasons - but were that variety suspended and one uniform character to be impressed upon the whole year our restlessness would be extreme and our complaints still more clamorous.

The heavenly bodies are objects that early strike our attention and impress us with the feeling of sublimity and beauty even before we know their history. That history which science has developed is little else than the history of the most wonderful contrivance and skill in the arrangement and position of the sun moon and stars. That such immense bodies are in motion at all is scarcely credible and the unenlightened mind. That their velocity is so very great is still more wonderful and that more than 2000 millions of world should for unknown years have continued in the most rapid motion and yet never interfere but move on in the most perfect and beautiful harmony manifests a degree of wisdom in their arrangement and in the laws imposed upon them as may well lay claims to the character of infinity. No wonder the Psalmist should exclaim, *O give thanks unto him who alone doeth great works; who by wisdom made the heavens; who made great lights the sun to rule by day and the moon and stars to rule by night; for his mercy endureth forever.*

There is one fact however on this subject which modern discoveries have brought to light and which we have no reason to suppose was known to holy men of old but which shows in the strongest light the wisdom of the Creator. It has been discovered that the laws of motions of the heavenly bodies are such that these motions will continue forever unless some new disturbing force intervene or the fiat of the Almighty order otherwise. And what throws additional beauty upon this curious principle is that those very irregularities in the motions of the planets that seemed to observers to threaten ultimate and certain destruction to the heavenly bodies those very irregularities are the means God has chosen to secure the perpetuity and I might say eternity of the planets motions. Surely we may exclaim with John on a different subject, *here is wisdom!*

To enumerate all the particular instances in which the Divine wisdom is exhibited most clearly in the works of creation would be to write a full history of creation. Yet there are certain general principles prominent in almost every part of nature that decidedly manifest this attribute of the Deity. Among these one of the most conspicuous is the wonderful and merciful adaptation of means to the ends. Whoever will examine his own frame will perceive numerous illustrations of this principle. The various parts of our animal systems are so placed and so constructed as is most convenient to answer their various purposes. The hands and the feet could in no other conceivable position or structure so well subserve their manifold uses as in that position and with that structure they actually have: and the

wonderful construction and safe and convenient positions of our eyes demonstrate the most profound wisdom in their creator. In short there is perhaps no part of the human system for which we cannot discover some object and in no instance could we suggest an improvement so as to have that object effected with greater facility.

This same most wonderful adaptation of means to the end appears in all other animals and in all other objects. We see it in the peculiar organization of different animals all of which are furnished with particular organs exactly adapted to their various modes of procuring sustenance. We see it in the various instances by which animals are led to guard against dangers and hardships of their condition. We see it most curiously displayed in the variety of modes in which different vegetables are made to multiply and reproduce and spread over disturbed regions. Some of these seeds are in the form of a boat with a sail and are thus wafted even across the widest oceans. Others have attached to them wings and feathers by which they are borne on the wind great distance. Others that are heavier are made the food of various birds and thus become transported from land to land.

Another circumstance we notice in the works of creation teaching us a lesson of the Divine Wisdom is the accomplishment of many ends by a few simple means.

*In human works, though laboured on with pain,  
A thousand movements scarce one object gain;  
In God's one single can its end produce;  
Yet serves to second too some other use.* [Source: Alexander Pope, 1891]

Let me illustrate this principle by a single instance. I refer to the various uses to which the element of water is made subservient. This is exhaled in the form of mist and a sending on high spreads over the heavens a rich and variegated canopy of clouds - now pouring forth from their treasures the soft and reviving shower upon the barren ground - now supplying with long continued rains the fountains of brooks and rivers - now mantling the earth in a fleece of snow and now descending in gentle dews. Thus are beauty and richness spread over the face of the earth which yields to man his food and drink and raiment. Water enters largely into the composition of all animals and vegetables and without it they could not exist. It also goes to make a part of the solid bodies and is often essential to their existence.

While it is employed in a vast variety of instances to give motion to different things of machinery for the abridgment of labour and a countless diversity of domestic purposes it serves in the ocean as a vast repository of salt - one of the necessary ingredients of food - and also facilitates the intercourse of nations serving as the medium of commerce and the habitation of innumerable ranks of peculiar beings. In fine let the single article of water be destroyed and this earth would become an uninhabited and uninhabitable waste. To render a single substance subservient to so many purposes must demand unsearchable wisdom: and similar remarks will apply to other elements as light heat and air.

Another circumstance indicative of Divine wisdom is the vast variety observable in the kingdom of nature. The number of simple substances out of which all the diversity we observe around us is produced does not exceed and is probably less than fifty. Yet such is the almost infinite variety of combinations which these are made to assume that they are almost literally innumerable. But amid all this diversity there exists certain general resemblances running through the whole of creation whereby the different bodies in animate and inanimate are grouped into families - genera and species. Such system and such diversity is strikingly indicative of boundless wisdom.

I might multiply almost without end examples of this character: but I am reminded that it is time to proceed to the second part of the discourse in which I propose to point out some of the manifestations of the divine wisdom that are exhibited to us in the kingdom of grace. By this term I understand as distinguished from the kingdom of nature all that is contained in and all that relates to that gracious and vast system by which God is reconciling and saving a guilty world.

And here our thoughts are directed at once to that inspired volume in which that merciful system is fully developed. Compared with the treasures of wisdom that volume presents the most profound inventions of the brightest human geniuses become foolishness. In that venerable book written by the pen of omniscience the rich and exhaustless treasures of the divine wisdom are opened before us and we dig the golden ore almost without effort. Before the meridian light and unsullied glory of that volume the feeble rich light of reason is absolutely lost. On every human product production there are stamped the features of imperfection and feebleness: but the bible bears up on its front the strong lineaments of perfection celestial grandeur and unerring wisdom. Justly therefore do the scriptures assume to themselves the title *the word of wisdom*.

The Gospel also on the plan of reconciling a lost world which the gospel unfolds is called in scripture *the wisdom of God*. Paul declares himself commissioned to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, *to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*. Thus it appears that one grand object God had in view in the incarnation death and sufferings of Christ was to exhibit his wisdom before the universe. The apostle in the same sentence with that just quoted calls the plan of redemption *a mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hidden in God*. The mystery was how man after he had broken the law of God and incurred its unyielding penalty could be pardoned and restored to the Divine favour. The highest archangel could not tell how. The system was hid in God until the fullness of the times and *without controversy great was the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory*.

Cannot one of us might the angels say, cannot one of us become a substitute for man satisfy the law of God and thus open the way of reason and reconciliation? No: they would reply: we are but overrated limited beings and therefore all our services are due to God: how then can we atone for the sins of another being? Much less how can we atone for an offense committed against an infinite being and infinite in its consequences. Man then quietly man must sink into the same eternal dungeon with those once our companions who kept not their first estate and there in everlasting chains under darkness expiate his crimes.

Here then was a case worthy of the interposition of the wisdom of God: and all the stores of that wisdom have been lavished upon it. And formidable as appeared the difficulties of the case they have all disappeared before the wonderful plan of recovering mercy by the incarnation of the only begotten son of God. Could not a created being atone for sin? Then he who thought it not robbery to be equal with God must accomplish it. Was it impossible for a being of limited nature to make satisfaction for infinite offence? Yet was it impossible for him *who is over all God blessed forever*. Was it impossible the divine nature should suffer? Yet when the Word was with God and who was God became flesh and took on him the seed of Abraham - this difficulty was removed and while the human nature alone suffered its union with the divine gave to those suffering an infinite value.

But to develop all the marks of wisdom God has displayed in the mystery of redemption would require volumes. Nay even the angels are still desirous of looking into the things and have not yet searched out

the unsearchable riches of Christ - and in exploring the height and depth and length and breadth of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge will occupy their enlarged minds throughout eternity. God grant that many of us may join them in that delightful investigation!

The plan of redemption is doubtless the most glorious display of the divine wisdom the universe has ever witnessed. Yet the personal experience of every individual who is accustomed to review God's dealings with him is full of additional proof of the wisdom of Jehovah. How often have the circumstances in our lives that seemed most adverse proved ultimately of the greatest benefit to us! God has led us in a way that we knew not - in a way that seemed to lead to misery and was beset with obstructions. Yet his wisdom saw it to be the road of peace and happiness in heaven: and now that we have passed over it we see how much wiser God was than ourselves. Often have we endeavoured to escape those trials and difficulties that threatened us with unmixed misery: but which in the end we found to be absolutely necessary to our peace and happiness. What reason have we when surveying our past lives to adore the wisdom and feel the goodness of God!

A few inferences will close the subject.

In the first place the subject teaches us how profitable it is to trace the marks of the Divine wisdom. In this discourse I have only hinted at a few of these marks. But they meet us at every step. So we turn our eyes to heaven. They are written on the sun the moon and the stars. Do we look around us on the earth they're stamped on every object we meet. Do we look within ourselves! How can we mistake or overlook the evidences of their existence! Do we look back upon our lives? Who does not see that the wisdom of God has led him all his days - and that if he had been left to his own wisdom he should have destroyed himself. And can any of us neglect to trace the marks of astonishing wisdom that are exhibited in the plan of salvation. This is a field in which the Christian eminently delights to range and adore and love.

2. The subject teaches us with what a spirit we ought to receive the declarations of scripture. They are the word of wisdom - not of human wisdom but of the wisdom of God. Unreserved and perfect acquiescence in everything they reveal is therefore the duty of all who read them. How foolish - how ridiculous does the man appear who cavils at anything he finds in the bible! A mere ignoramus objecting to infinite wisdom! A being who is bounded on every side by a span attempting to judge the infinite God! Surely if any object is contemptible in the view of the angels it is the man who sets up his reason in opposition to the declarations of Jehovah.

3. This leads me to remark that the subject teaches us humility. Let the most learned and judicious man compare himself with the Deity and he cannot but be ashamed of pride. Compare himself with Jehovah did I say? All comparison is out of the case - finite and infinite do not admit of comparison.

4. Finally how ought we to rejoice in the government of God! That government is guided by unending wisdom: and whatever comes upon us we may rest assured is a result of that government. Be it then prosperity or adversity sickness or health life or death we have continued reason for rejoicing that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. For that omnipotence is under the guidance of infinite wisdom.

Delivered

At Conway February 1824

At Mount Pleasant November 1830

## Sermon 218 Benevolence of God

[Sermon No. 218, "Benevolence of God," Matthew 19:17 Part II, 1824 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 7]

Matthew 19:17

*There is none good but one, that is God.*

The subject proposed for examination at this time is the evidence revelation presents of the divine benevolence. And after I have been following the dim and wandering light of unassisted reason feebly glimmering amid the thick darkness of paganism is really refreshing to feel that I am advancing to the daylight and that the sun of brightness is rising above the horizon to scatter the gloom and the damp of this moral night and to pour a bright and living glory over the character of God. The traveler who has all night long wandered without a guide ignorant of his situation does not see with more pleasure the morning streaking the horizon and throwing light and beauty over the landscape. Nor does he with more pleasure now mount some eminence - examine the position of surrounding objects - trace the streams along their winding paths and gaze on the villages and towns that lie beneath the overhanging mountains. Than the Christian traveller opens a volume of revelation after groping in the worse than Cretan labyrinth of heathen superstition and nature's darkness. He here finds his errors corrected his just hopes confirmed, his view established and his soul elevated. The goodness of God which seemed so bruised to the eye reason amid the evils and disorders of life shines forth in the bible unobscured. But let us descend to particulars.

In the first place revelation furnishes a natural and credible account of the primitive state of man and of the manner of the introductions of moral evil.

It assures us that *God made man upright* that he was placed in paradise holy and happy and might have continued so and communicated the like holiness and happiness to the unborn millions of our race. But a foil fiend from the lower world assaults him and though he had power to stand he was also free to fall. He did fall - and with him fell all his posterity. Take the Scripture account of this apostasy and tell me do you perceive anything with which to blame God - anything to disprove his benevolence? On the contrary how conclusive proof of his goodness is the fact that he created man holy and happy!

In the second place the bible assures us that man is placed in a state of probation in this world.

He is here in a condition of trial: forming a character for eternity. The evils he suffers are all calculated to discipline him for happiness in another world: and none of them come upon him which would not prove beneficial to him were he to improve them as he might. And even those evils that are misimproved are so overruled by the wise providence of God as to result in the good of the universe. Thus it happens that the various natural evils of life when viewed through the medium of revelation are indicative of goodness instead of malevolence in the Deity.

In the third place revelation assures us of the certainty of a future state of retribution.

After this is disclosed to us we need no more be distressed when we see the unequal distribution of

happiness in the world and so often witness the prosperity of the worst of men and the pressing adversity of the best. Were this the only state of their existence this inequality would indeed be a dark cloud on the moral character of God. But when we are assured that all this seeming unequal pressure of evils will be rectified in a few short years - when perhaps this serenity of suffering the good man endures is the grand instrument that makes him good and is only the prelude of eternal joy: and when we remember that the prosperity of the wicked may be only the flash of lightning that precedes the storm of God's wrath with what different feelings do we look upon the evils endured on earth! How little comparative consequence does it appear to us whether a man be prosperous or unfortunate here. Eternity! Eternity! Swallows up the whole and while we realize its unspeakable importance we almost forget the short afflictions of time.

In the fourth place revelation exhibits to us the wickedness of man in a very different light from the unaided suggestions of reason.

We are taught in the bible that it was nothing but the mere benevolence of God that prevented him from destroying the whole race of by executing his threatened penalty upon Adam. It shows us also that all men are sinners by nature children of wrath - that is deserving of the everlasting wrath of God and that where he looked down from heaven upon the children of men he saw none righteous no not one. But instead of executing upon men his deserved wrath God sustains them in existence and summons them with mercies prevents them from realizing the genuine effects of their sins and gives them a space for repentance. All this is done let it be remembered by God for ungrateful rebels - for the enemies of his character and government - for those who deserve *indignation and wrath tribulation and anguish*. Is not this a manifestation of benevolence transcending that of the highest archangel and capable of proceeding only from a being who is infinite!

But fifthly a still brighter display of the divine benevolence is exhibited in the works of Redemption.

Is it not enough that beings so sinful as men are should be continued in existence and receive the mercies of this life? No: a benevolent God resolves to devise and execute a plan for their restoration to his favour and elevation to eternal felicity. But how shall this be accomplished? The rebels had broken the law of God whose curse was eternal death: and it was impossible that penalty could be escaped unless some sort of satisfaction were made - unless the ransom were paid. His only begotten and dearly beloved Son who had shared with him the honours and glories and blessings of his eternal throne and who thought it not robbery to be equal with God must be delivered up to perform this mighty work. So strong did the fire of benevolence burn in the bosom the Father that he shrunk not from yielding up the exalted and precious sacrifice and to raise the sword against the man that was his fellow. Then there fell upon the harmless head of man's substitute the tremendous curse of a broken law. And while men were nailing him to the cross so strong was his love for their souls that he could only pray for their forgiveness: and so strong was the love of the Father for men that even this horrid spectacle of ingratitude and cruelty could not overcome it. But he let loose in that dreadful hour upon the head of his beloved Son the unmitigated severity of his wrath towards sinners: and ceased not to make his soul an offering for sin till he could say it is finished till he could be just while he justified the believer in Jesus.

The barrier that the justice of God had thrown across the gate of heaven against man's admittance was now removed. But still another bar lay in the sinner's heart: for it was still alienated from God and everything good. The benevolence of God finds out a mode of sermonizing this also.



The Eternal Spirit the purchase of the Saviour's agonies must descend and enter the heart of the revolted rebel and kindly persuaded it to be reconciled to God by turning the eye of faith upon the cross. The expedient succeeded and man felt his enmity slain in a moment at the spectacle of a bleeding Saviour - the sight of the love and tenderness that beamed from his expiring countenance.

Still however the work was not complete. For after the heart of man was thus reconciled and retained within it the elements of apostasy and needed a powerful impulse to enable it to persevere to the end. The promise of God therefore goes forth that he will never leave his work again until it be completed in heaven. And the holy spirit is commissioned to take up its abode in the regenerate soul and never abandon it till sin has abandoned it forever.

This is the work the mighty work of redemption - a work into which angels desire to look. And exalted as are their apprehensions of the divine goodness they may have learned a new lesson and gathered fresh matter for their everlasting song. For all this immense sacrifice and effort were made in behalf of guilty rebels at whose instant destruction every voice in heaven would have joined in the paean of praise - *just and true are thy judgments O Lord*. Before such a display of infinite benevolence the goodness of an archangel fades and the virtue of man is gross and selfish. *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

In the sixth place the nature of the glory and infelicity offered to man through the Saviour exalts still higher our apprehensions of the Divine benevolence.

Keep in mind an idea of the character of all men by nature - remember that God declares that among them all he could see none righteous - no not one - carry this fact deeply impressed on your mind up to the gate of heaven and cast your eye into that blessed kingdom and observe what riches of grace must have been lavished in offering its eternal unspeakable and unfading glories and felicities to such an unworthy rebel! Man is not offered a mere release from punishment - not a mere release from sin but divine goodness has been superadded to all this *an exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. He has opened to them the fountain of eternal bliss and invites every son and daughter of Adam to drink without money and without price. He has guarded the celestial paradise against the possibility of the entrance of sin or sorrow and while we admire that love which could furnish to beings so unworthy fullness of joy, we hear fear here that same infinite benevolence proclaiming that this unspeakable bliss shall be eternal. Cast your eyes back my hearers and behold from what a depth of degradation man is raised - gaze on that wisdom and grace displayed in rescuing him from the power of wretchedness of sin in the glorious plan redemption - and then carry forward your thoughts into heaven and behold the saints rising in happiness and glory through all eternity and tell me if here be not a display of divine benevolence that amazes that confounds that overwhelms - that melts the soul! O dead, howsoever dead is that heart which is not subdued by this exhibition of infinite love and grace unspeakable! Who would not echo the language of John, *God is love*.

Will the cold hearted sceptic reply to all this evidence of the divine benevolence derived from revelation that we are reasoning in a circle by taking for granted the veracity of God in his word? I reply we depend not on the mere declarations of scripture: but on that series of dispensations that system of miracles and prophecies which have for so many centuries attended the progress of revelation and which are attested by evidence so conclusive that nothing but a wicked heart can resist them. These are sufficient to fix the truth of the bible and this being fixed the wonderful system of God's benevolence just described stands developed in grand and matchless splendour.

This subject will be closed with a few inferences and remarks.

In the first place I remark that the goodness or benevolence of God comprehends the whole of his moral character.

The benevolence of God is infinite: and an infinitely benevolent being must be a perfectly just being: for were he in any way unjust he could not be benevolent but would be cruel. An infinitely benevolent being must also be a being of entire veracity - since deception would prove him malevolent. Infinite goodness too implies infinite mercy. Hence then we see the propriety of that beautiful declaration of the Apostle that *God is love*. He does not say merely that God is *benevolent* but that he is *benevolence* itself.

In the second place if God act under the influence of pure and perfect benevolence then all objections against any part of his conduct are objections against his goodness.

All men acknowledge the goodness of God: yet many murmur on account of the situation in life in which God has placed them and feel a disposition to complain when he afflicts them and takes away darling comforts. But their situation in life and their privations are all the result of the Divine goodness. Others object against God's determining every event from eternity - and forming his purposes from eternity. But it was perfect benevolence that led him to form these purposes from eternity - and therefore they object against perfect benevolence. Others object against God's establishing such a connection between Adam and his posterity that in consequence of his transgression they all become sinners or as the bible expresses it, *by the disobedience of one many were made sinners*. But if God's moral character consists in benevolence then it was benevolence that induced him to permit Adam to sin and such disastrous consequences to result to his posterity. Others object against God's saving one person according to his purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was and leaving another to perish. But the object against the goodness of God. For that some will be saved and others destroyed is certain from the scriptures and both reason and scripture unite in testifying that God is the original cause of this difference since he might if he pleased save them all. But infinite goodness did not permit him to do this - and therefore the objection lies against his goodness. In short every objection that was ever made against any part of God's conduct must have been made against his benevolence.

Thirdly if the immutable and infinite goodness of God does not prevent him from punishing sin in this world we have no reason to infer from his goodness that he will not punish it in another world.

Men are apt to have the impression that punishment especially in God implies something arbitrary and tyrannical. But which is the most benevolent father he who chastises his satisfactory child and thus prevents him from corrupting his other children or that father who leaves his wicked child to go on unpunished and thus to ruin himself and others? So it by no means detracts from the benevolence of God that he hates and punishes sin: but on the contrary it shows his benevolence to be of a pure and exalted kind - of a kind which harmonizes with justice and which will not sacrifice the good of the whole to a weak pity to individual offenders. And if he does punish sin in this world without destroying his benevolence as all must acknowledge - nay if his very goodness impels to this - why may he not why must he not punish it in another world? Why should it be thought any more derogatory to his benevolence to execute the deserve penalties of his law in eternity than in time?

Fourthly I remark that no inference against the eternity of future punishments can be drawn from the

benevolence of God.

I have already shown that if the benevolence of God does not prevent him from punishing sinners in this life it will not prevent him from punishing them in another life. And since the highest good of the universe is the motive that will induce him to punish them hereafter how do we know but the highest good of the universe will require him to punish them eternally? It is not possible for any man to determine how long this may require their punishment: but until we can determine this we can not say but the same purpose that requires their punishment an hour or a day will require their eternal misery. In order to determine how long the wicked must suffer in another world we must depend altogether on the express declarations of God in his word. And if he has not there told us that their misery will be literally eternal no language can express it.

In the fifth place I infer from what has been said that the everlasting punishment of the wicked will result from the infinite benevolence of God.

If benevolence be the essence of his moral character it is the secret moving spring of all his actions. Of course as he will forever punish the wicked this part of his conduct will proceed from his benevolence. And this fact will be keenest of those pangs the wicked will feel. Could they believe that God punished them through a malignant revengeful spirit it would powerfully sustain them under their agonies. But while his perfect goodness will dispose him to hate and to punish their perfect wickedness he still will have a benevolent feelings towards them - just as the kind father feels benevolently towards his ungrateful child at the very moment when his hand is inflicting the mental chastisement. All this the finally impenitent will realize: and Oh with what a tenfold forceful will it send home every pang they feel into the very core of their hearts!

Finally with how amiable a character does the benevolence of God invest him!

The holy fire of goodness burns within him pure and unquenchable forever: and sends forth its heat and its light to warm and to cheer the whole universe. It leads him always with a steady aim to pursue not merely the better about the highest good for the universe. Who must not love the Being who is love? Alas men hate that character because it is the opposite of their own. The image of God is effaced from their hearts by sin. But the regenerated soul having through the grace of God regained this image cannot but gaze and gaze with holy delight upon a being of infinite perfections - and while he muses upon it the fire of devotion and love will burn. O Christian to gaze upon study admire and adore the character of a God of infinite goodness will constitute a large part of your eternal employment and enjoyment. Let it then constitute much of your employment and enjoyment on earth – and thus will you be prepared for the higher services of heaven.

Delivered

At Conway January 1824

At Amherst College September 1844

## Sermon 219 Exposition of Fifth Chapter of Romans

[Sermon No. 219, Exposition of Romans Ch. 5, 1825 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 8]

*[See Sermon 235 for an explanation of expository sermons such as this one.]*

With the apostle Paul the preaching of the doctrines of the gospel was not a matter of mere dry speculation. He did not like some of his successors present us with a mere skeleton of truth without one part deficient indeed and most exactly fitted together but still destitute of flesh and blood - destitute of life and soul. Once he first constructed such a skeleton - and none could do it more skillfully and effectually than he: but he did not stop there. It has happened that too many defenders of the gospel - men of sterling talent - that when they had just put forth the highest effort of their reasoning powers and placed the truth on an eminence too high for scepticism and opposition to reach - then they had no more that they could do. They would show us truth in its just proportions and lead us to admire the ingenuity that could thus divest it of the entanglements of dross error and sin: but they could not bring that truth near the conscience and make us feel that we had a personal interest in it and cause it to exist a transforming influence upon us. It appeared to us like the moon in meridian splendor in a cold winters night - a beautiful object indeed but affording no warmth to soften the rigors of an inclement season. But Paul after he had made manifest the harmony and proportion of truth never fails to apply it for reproof for correction for instruction. Well knowing that much lies hid in truth and it wants only the warm heart of piety brought into contact to draw it forth he always endeavoured to make the truth reach not only the understanding but also to enter and warm the heart. Hence it is that we so frequently meet in his writing with such striking applications of the gospel doctrines to the various conditions of men. These conclusions often come upon us like the voice of some kind angel commissioned to heal the bleeding heart and to lend a mighty vigor to drooping faith. Sometimes they come clothed with all the thunders of omnipotence to check us in the road of sin and to animate us in the course of duty. Now the voice of infinite love comes stealing upon the frozen heart with resistless persuasion. Now the province and now the purpose of God are exhibited as the immutable things in which it is impossible God should lie that we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us. And now in one concentrated sentence in one mighty thrust of inspiration all the motives this world can furnish are poured in a torrent upon the careless soul to awaken it from spiritual death.

To many Paul's reasoning in the first four chapters of Romans concerning justification by faith may seem dry and unimportant speculation. But when the apostle comes to the application of the subject he shows that his heart as well as his understanding was full of the subject. To those who like the primitive Christians were compelled literally to forsake all for Christ to suffer want and cold nakedness and reproach and persecution and whose lives were in constant jeopardy - how consoling and cheering to such this conclusion drawn from this doctrine of justification in the commencement of the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans!

Read five verses.

Verses 1 - 5.

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:  
By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,*

*and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

Had their justification depended on their good works - so imperfect and deficient and few are these even in the holiest saint - they never could have obtained any solid and lasting peace but must have been harassed and distressed by perpetual doubts. But now high as their sins had risen the ocean of grace exhibited in the works of redemption rose above them: and feeling a lively faith in the Saviour they would not fear but their sins were washed away and the middle wall or partition between God and their souls broken down and eternal reconciliation effected. It was through the Saviour alone by means of faith that they had been introduced into this state of grace and acceptance in which they stood and were enabled to rejoice in hope of the everlasting glory of God in heaven. But more than this: while an irreligious world looked on tribulation and affliction as the greatest of evils aiming a death blow at their happiness, the Christian justified by faith could exult himself even these very afflictions: for he was sure they were working together for his good and would enable him to glorify his God and Savior in a better manner and that when compared with eternal joys they were not worthy to be regarded. The result of such tribulation would be a patient state of mind robbing misfortune of the power of rendering a man miserable. And the exercise of that patience would produce a valuable experience of God's supporting power of his nearness to the afflicted and tempted soul - an experience of the power of faith and Christian principles to sustain a man through every difficulty. Such experience could not but establish and strengthen the Christian's hope of eternal joys. It would be such a hope as would not shame with disappointment for the Christian had already received a foretaste of what essentially constitutes the felicity of heaven. The love of God - the essence of happiness had been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. It did not spring up there by his cultivation - it did not depend for its presentation and increase upon human strength - but it was planted it was nourished by the Spirit of God - and therefore it would remain - it would flourish forever. And possessing this the believer could not be robbed of heaven for he would carry heaven in his own bosom. For as the poet says

*The mind is its own place and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell of heaven. [Source: Paradise Lost, John Milton, 1667]*

There is a mode of reasoning often employed - where we proceed from the less to the greater from the weaker to the stronger and it carries a great weight with it. We show a thing to be true in unfavourable circumstances and then with powerful emphasis we infer its greater certainty in more favourable circumstances. If in adversity a man unsolicited shows you friendship how much more here you reason to expect the continuance of his friendship in prosperity? If when your heart was at enmity with a man he was labouring for your good how very certain is it that when you have become reconciled to him and endeavor to make a return for his kindness his friendship and good offices will be continued. Paul makes a happy use of this mode of reasoning in the five next verses of this chapter with a view to inspire with hope and confidence the heart of the believer.

Read to the 11th verse.

Verses 6 – 11.

*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

The question is often asked whether there is any difference intended by the apostle between a righteous man and a good man in the seventh verse? (Read it)

*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die:  
yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

By a righteous man is doubtless to be understood a strictly just man one who renders to all their dues: because the laws of morality and religion demand it. But such a character is evidently inferior to the good man - that is to the benevolent man who does good to all more from the involuntary prompting of a heart full of love than from a ceremonious adherence to any law. And therefore to save the life of such an one a man would be more apt to sacrifice his own life than for the nearly righteous or just man.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> verse believers are said to be saved by the life of the Son of God. In what sense is this true? A contrast is here exhibited between the death of Christ and his recovered life - that life he received when he rose from the dead. And if there was efficacy enough in his death to reconcile with God surely the power which he now possesses and the grace he exercises and the intercession he makes in his state of exultation will be sufficient to bring the believer into the same blessed world at last.

But Paul does not rest satisfied with merely proving the believer to have grounds of hope through faith in the merits of Christ. There is a ground also for joy. (Read the 11th verse) Observe here the beauty of the climax the apostle employs in the preceding verses. First he says that by justification through faith peace was obtained by the believer: next he tells us that this justification enabled him to glory in tribulation and finally he speaks of the effects if it to be joy - a joy in adversity as well as in prosperity - in death as well as in life. The word atonement used in this verse which we are said to receive signifies nothing more than the reconciliation before spoken of and not sacrifice of Christ for sin - but merely the effect of that sacrifice.

We have now reached a part of this chapter that has been regarded in every age and by commentators of every name as having about it some difficulty and obscurity. It is very obvious however what is the general object of Paul from the 12th to the 19th verses viz. to draw a parallel between the damage we receive from the sin of Adam and the benefit derived from the atonement of Christ. To show that the detriment from the former is not so great as the advantage from the latter. Bearing this in mind the passage may appear less obscure (Read to the end of the chapter.)

Verses 12 – 21.

*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is*

*no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)*

*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

It is obvious also that many single truths of great importance besides the general one already alluded to are clearly taught in this passage. For to say that there are obscurities in a sentence does not necessarily imply that there is nothing clear and definite in it. The obscurity in this case consist chiefly in the omission of several words which it is necessary to supply in order to complete the sense and in thus supplying these words room is given for different opinions. The 12th and 18th verses of this chapter seem to be immediately connected and the intervening verses are regarded as forming a parenthesis. The 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> verses will read thus (Read them).

The following translation or rather paraphrase of the whole of this passage may assist us in understanding the true meaning of these verses.

*[The following section is in a different handwriting, possibly that of Orra Hitchcock.]*

*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all men (through all generations) sin: For until the (Mosaic) law sin was in the world: but sin is not charged whence there is no law at all. Besides, death reigned from Adam to Moses, over even infants and idiots, who had not sinned actively after the the similitude of the transgression of Adam, who is in some respects similar to him that was to come. But the free gift is not as the offence. Truly, if by means of the offence all mankind are exposed to death temporal and spiritual; much more the grace of God and the gift by grace which is by one man Jesus Christ hath abounded until all man dies. And the gift is not as it was by one hast sinned: for the judgment was in consequence of one offence to condemnation; but the free gift is from all offences unto righteousness; for if in consequence one man's offence death reigned by means of this one; much more they which receive the abundance of the grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by means of the one Jesus Christ. Therefore as in consequence of the offence sentence is upon all men to condemnation, even so by means of one righteousness, the free gift is upon all men unto acquittal and remission which restores life temporal and eternal. For as in consequence of one man's disobedience all are liable to actual sin and for their actual sins (had not Christ died) would be subject to eternal punishment so by means of the obedience of one, all have been, and shall be in a capacity for becoming righteous and receiving eternal life. The reward of righteousness according to the tenor of the covenant. Moreover the law intended that the offence might abound, and whence sin abounded of man did much more abound: that as sin reigns unto death even so grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by means of Christ our Lord.*

*[Edward's handwriting resumes.]*

The inferences that flow from this important chapter are numerous. But as time will not permit an examination of them this morning I must defer them till the afternoon. And may God send into our hearts at Holy Spirit who is able not only to cause us to understand the truths which he dictated to holy men of old but also dispose us to apply them to our own particular cases and thereby to make us wise unto salvation. Amen.

Delivered

At Conway January 1825



## Sermon 220 Inferences from Romans Fifth

[Sermon No. 220, Inferences from Romans, Ch. 5, 1825 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 8]

The closer the preacher of the gospel adheres to the holy scriptures the greater is the prospect that his labours will not be in vain. He may not indeed be able to amuse his hearers so much with pleasing speculations as if he wandered more from the scriptures into the fields of fancy and romance. They may indeed listen with less attention and interest in general to the man who departs not from the sober limits of the inspired record than to him who performs many a meteor flight and reaches no certain point. But if one truth from the word of God enters his heart it is vastly better than all the temporary excitements of animal feeling or the uninfluential emotion of admiration. For the word of God is quick and powerful sharper than a two edged sword piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and proving a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Human eloquence and learning may pour in upon a delighted audience a torrent agitates and leads captive the heart and the understanding. But it is a captivity to reason and feeling not to the obedience of Christ. After man's eloquence has done its best it is necessary that the word of God come in to convert the soul. The truth of this is illustrated in the history of that devoted class of Christians Moravians. With them the simple reading of God's word and prayer constitute the principal means on which they depend for success and when is there a denomination of Christians that wins a greater proportion of its congregation or more devoted professes to its communion table? With what other engine but the simple word of God could these intrepid soldiers of the cross have won over to Christian kindness and love the frozen Esquimaux or the besotten Hottentot?

From the same quiver filled by the Almighty whence so many arrows have been already drawn would I at this time resort and from the chapter that occupies us in the morning make some of these inferences that flow most naturally and seem of the greatest importance for reproof correction and instruction.

1. The fifth chapter of Romans shows us the genuine effect of true religion upon the human mind.

And this effect is very different from the ideas of those who have never felt its power. They look upon religion as imposing a hard service upon its votaries and as producing gloom and monastic melancholy. But let the inspired man who could speak from his own experience show us what are the fruits of the Christian religion upon a man's own heart. Paul tells us that one of these is *peace with God*. It is not the mere withdrawal of his wrath and curse from us: but the enmity that lay in our hearts towards his character and government is subdued and a delightful complacency in him takes the place of it. It is not that fancied peace with God which every careless sinner fancies he possesses merely because he is ignorant of himself and of God and he perceives no visible contest going on between his heart and God: but it is that peace which looks back to the time when the heart saw its hostility and remembers how bitter and severe it was - how it struggled even to desperation before it yielded: but it remembers how at last it did yield - how it looked to the bleeding cross of Christ and felt its opposition melt away in a calm and peaceful acquiescence in God succeeded. It now possesses a sweet complacency in the divine character: all its attributes beautifully harmonize especially in that peace of redemption and even in the trials and afflictions the Christians call to endure. Yes, even in the darkest hour of tribulation there is peace in the believers soul - not one murmuring thought towards God the author of the trial. Nay more he triumphs in tribulations and this according to Paul constitutes another of the effects of true religion on the soul. The unrenewed man can be joyful when fortune smiles upon him. But when adversity

sweeps over him he is left barren and desolate and hopeless. A heavy gloom or a stoical apathy rest upon him. But the believer can smile and hope and even triumph at such an hour. His head may be bow to the earth by the stroke - and one blow may only be the prelude of others more severe just ready to fall upon him: yet no pressure can keep down his soul - it will rise on the swings of faith to the bosom of God. The eye of faith will look forward and see in spite of surrounding darkness the exceeding weight of glory that awaits the believer as a reward of all his sufferings here. It sees a higher seat prepared in heaven for those who are sunk the lowest here by adversity and improve under their chastisements. And although the Christian may feel sometimes the misgivings of nature yet faith will triumph over nature and triumph too in the furnace of affliction assured that the God of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego is walking with her through the fire.

Another effect of pure religion on the soul is holy joy. And if a man really believe himself brought into favour with God - and feel that no more condemnation awaits him and possesses a hope that a crown of glory is laid up for him in heaven and feels in his heart the kindling of that love to God which will furnish the food of happiness without measure and without end should not the thrills of holy joy and at seasons come over his soul with a most refreshing influence? O ye votaries of the world - ye who fancy religion to be associated with gloom could you feel but one transient moment the peace and the joy of the good man you would not exchange that moment for all the feverish transports the world affords.

But do any of us Christian brethren with a desponding sigh exclaim that such peace and triumph in tribulation and holy joy rarely visit us and that we therefore fear that we are ignorant of true religion? If so must we not impute it to the low state of vital religion in our hearts? To the powerful influence exerted upon us by the world? Are not such peace and joy the genuine fruits of justification by faith - does not Paul represent them thus - have not the most devoted believers found them such? Paul does not indeed say that such a state of feeling shall always possess the Christian's bosom nor must you expect this. But if this peace and joy and glorying in tribulation be never felt by us we have reason to enquire seriously whether we have ever passed from death into life. I make this remark as a general one - not intended to apply to every case: for I well know how darkening and distressing an influence a peculiar temperament may exert in covering even the most humble Christian with one unbroken and rayless night of doubt and desponding.

2. We learn from this chapter that the hope of the Christian should increase and brighten with his experience. Paul says that tribulation *worketh patience and patience experience and experience hope*. Here the Christian is exhibited to us as placed in the midst of trials - trials from the world from his own heart and from the dispensations of providence. He continues struggling with these for a considerable period too. Otherwise there would not be time to exercise patience. The exercise of this world brings into operation of the Christian graces and thus constitute the believers experience. This experience would convince a man more and more that he possessed a really Christian character. It would test the soundness of his principles because it would bring them to bear upon practice in a difficult situation. It would test the reality of his attachment to his God and Saviour if he found himself clinging closer to their God when his chastening hand lay upon him. It would test the reality and genuineness of their faith if it did not fail them in a day of darkness and suffering. Taking a view of this experience the believer would find his hope insensibly gathering strength according to the greater or less degree in which Christian principles and Christian graces were brought into exercise.

The ground of the believers hope my hearers is the same in all ages. And if this experience of the primitive Christians gave confidence to their hope the same effect ought now to result from the same cause. If so we see how wrong a course those take to obtain a hope of heaven who sit down in a

melancholy frame and refuse to act in the cause of religion until some overwhelming impulse flashes irresistible conviction upon their minds that they are children of God. How many have spent more time in lamenting that they had no hope than would have been necessary to give them one have they resolved to attempt the fulfillment of all the commandments of God and to exercise all the Christian graces. How many are labouring after deep excitement of their feelings and religious transports and who place more dependance upon these transient frames of mind as evidence of the Christian character than upon a whole life spent in the steady exercise of the best of the the Christian graces! How many who are bright examples of patience humility charity and all the Christian graces spend all their lives in a state of despondency because they cannot attain to a violent state of feelings and to ecstatic religious joy: when if they would follow the rules here given by Paul and look to their daily experience for evidence of their religious character they would be satisfied that the *love of God had been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost*.

My brethren if we have not been called to pass through such tribulation as the primitive Christians we have been under the discipline of God and of course have had occasion for the exercise of that patience which worketh experience: and now has that experience strengthened our hope? Do we find it brightening more and more as we go onwards in our religious course? If not what must be the conclusion? Does it result from constitutional melancholy: or more probably does it result from our living so far from God that we can hardly be said have any experience? If our Christian graces do indeed lie buried under the rubbish of the world – if our principles exert no controlling influence upon us if our hearts are not warm and our hands are not busy in the service of God better will it be for us at once to abandon our hope of heaven than to run the risque of having it perish when God taketh away the soul.

3. From the chapter under consideration we learn that the grand reason the Christian has for believing is hope will not prove delusion is the fact that his religious affections results from a divine influence. Why was not Paul ashamed of his hope - why did he not fear his brethren would finally ashamed of theirs? Not because they were so holy - not because they stood apparently so firm in their faith: but because *the love of God had been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost*. Had their hope rested on human resolutions or human efforts well might he have trembled for it. But since God had taken the works of their sanctification into his hands Paul justly felt confidence that it would go forward to its consummation in the realities of heavenly joy.

But of us my brethren rest our hope of heaven upon the strength of our resolution - or religious habits or advanced state of holiness. If Paul dare not rest it here if he looked for perseverance only to a divine influence let us also expect it from the same quarter. For in truth there is enough of remaining ire in the holiest heart to rise up and usurp its lost dominion and to spread havock through the soul and to drive away from the heart every Christian if the agency of God be withdrawn. Let us fear lest by our sins we grieve the Holy Spirit and be abandoned to sin after all. Christian you are in imminent danger of being thus abandoned unless you use the means God has appointed and pray earnestly to him for grace you will one day become what Paul feared he should become, an apostate and a castaway.

4. From the chapter under consideration we derive the strongest encouragement for the Christian. While we were sinners and enemies Christ died for us and thereby reconciled the believer to God. And now if he had compassion enough upon a man while he was an enemy to make such a sacrifice will not that same compromise be sufficient to carry forward that man in holiness to the end after he has become reconciled? With what irresistible force does the apostle infer that if when we *were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his own Son much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life*? If a man has not abandoned every hope that he is reconciled to God how can he doubt that he shall

be saved. He may indeed fear that he is self-deceived but after reading what the apostle has written in this chapter he cannot fear lest he should fail of heaven through any deficiency of power or willingness on the part of God to save him.

The same argument may also be applied to the case of those who have so deep a sense of their sinfulness that they are ready to...

*[A single sheet is inserted here (right panel of page 7) that may belong elsewhere. The transcription appears at the end of the sermon.]*

...despair of mercy. What! Would Christ have submitted to all the hardship and suffering he actually endured on earth for the express purpose of making a propitiation for the sins of the whole world all were his obstinate enemies if after all he were unwilling to meet with pardon those in whom to say the least he discovered a sincere desire to come to him? After what he has done and declared is not the distrust of his readiness to succor and save the sinner the most aggravated of all sins?

*[An asterisk at this point may indicate the proper position for an additional page of text which is transcribed here.]*

If the other truths of revelation all point to this as their center - if they lose their saving efficacy and spread over the hopes of our race an impenetrable gloom without the cross of Christ - if God blesses no other preaching than this - if this is the only effectual way of preaching gospel morality - if the soul burdened with sin can find no secure relief but in the cross and if this be the nourishment on which alone the believer can grow and advance towards the fullness of the stature of perfect ones - if all this be true and who that knows anything in the history of the church does not know it to be true - then it were the height of presumption - the very extravagance of self-confidence for the preacher of the Gospel to neglect to make this declaration and to abide by it without wavering. If he go forth to fight the battle of the Lord without buckling the cross upon his breast he rushes unarmed upon a phalanx of bristling spears: nor will he be anymore able to conquer the hearts of God's enemies than the most stripling recruit without one weapon can cope with a veteran battalion of warriors. Or let such a man be armed with the power of a commanding erudition or eloquence: he will find these weapons when directed against the depraved heart of man encased in the triple folds sin Satan and the world were wove around it - he will find them feeble as influences the dart of aged Priam which rebounded harmless from the buckler of Phrynos. Or let such a minister even take up the awful threatenings of God and hold them in menacing array over the heads of sinners. He will find that these without the cross serve only to add new strength to the opposition of the heart to God and to muster within it a stouter more determined defense than ever. And after all his eloquence and all his warnings he will be led to exclaim with the reformer, *Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon.*

But he the brethren of whose finalizing in Christ Jesus and him crucified clad as he is in armour not of human workmanship but bright from the armory of heaven will find the sword of the Spirit accompanying his efforts and cleaving to the dividing asunder of soul and Spirit. Fruitless as may seem his labours in many senses he will find at the day of judgment that they were not unproductive but were radically effective and did *prove a savour of life unto life or of death under death.* When all other arguments to holiness have been tried in vain upon man's hardened heart the argument of Christ crucified comes home upon him with a power he cannot resist. If men are not converted by if they are more affected by it than by any other preaching.

[End of insertion.]

Finally from this chapter the ministers of the Gospel may learn the wisdom of declaring to their people like Paul, *I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

(See former part of the discourse)

If men are by nature the children of wrath if in consequence of the apostacy of Adam have sinned and every moral agent has become an enemy of God - if they are subject to death temporal spiritual and eternal - every man must see how admirably suited to man's case is Christ crucified. Even those who doubt whether man's natural condition is thus desperate sometimes tremble lest it may prove true nay almost every man in the course of his life has reasons when his own experience testifies to the truth of this doctrine and then he impressively realizes that Jesus Christ and him crucified is the last refuge of the soul - the only name in heaven given among men whereby we can be saved.

And now my impenitent hearers again I ask whether Paul in this chapter does not place it beyond all question that all who are unrenewed are the enemies of God? If so does he not describe your character as well as that of other sinners? If so how can you escape the punishment due to God's enemies but by the cross of Christ? Blessed be God that I am permitted to speak to you of the fullness there is in time and of his readiness to receive you. Desperate as is your condition - becoming worse as it is every day - it is not yet too late if you *choose this day whom you will serve* and this day accept his salvation. But my commission extends not to go the morrow - Tomorrow! Your case may be decided ere it arrive! Tomorrow! It may be the commencement of a miserable eternity. *Now then as an ambassador for Christ as though God did beseech you by me I pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.*

5. From this chapter we learn all who die are sinners. Paul expressly says that *death passed upon all for that all have sinned.* It follows then inevitably that every individual of the race who dies is a sinner. But you say how can the infant of whom thousands die daily be as sinner before he knows what sin is? If you admit that Paul was inspired is it not difficult to reply that he declares all who die are in some sense sinners and therefore infants of every age are sinners because they die. All do not indeed sin after the similitude of Adam's transgressions that is knowingly and willfully; but all possess a sinful disposition and this is doubtless the sense in which the apostle declares infants to be sinners.

But Christian parents if such be the character of infants and how can you avoid this conclusion if you believe the apostle's word then it is absolutely necessary that they be born again or they cannot enter the kingdom of God. If so it becomes your duty daily and earnestly to pray for your offspring from the first moment of their existence. How little does that man deserve the name of a Christian parent who can neglect the duty!

6. From this chapter we learn that men derive their corrupt dispositions or natures from Adam. *By one man sin entered into the world - by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.* What can be plainer than such language as this to show that men are sinners in consequence of their first Father's sin? We may multiply as many objections as we please to this doctrine: but this will not destroy the language of the apostle. The fact will still be true resting as it does on the surest of all testimony - the word that God who cannot lie.

7. From this chapter we learn that men before conversion are the enemies of God. Paul is speaking of real believers of those who have become reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and he says, *if when we*

*were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, etc.* Here he represents as clearly as words can do it that all who were then Christians have been the enemies of God: and is it to be supposed that all who became Christians were from the worst of men and that those who continued in heathenism were of a better character? The supposition is absurd: and the conclusion hence is that all men while unrenewed are in a state of enmity with God. For these verses will apply to Christians now as well as in former ages and therefore will apply to the world's entire population now as well as in the days of the apostle. The fact of man's native enmity to his Maker does not indeed rest on the single passage: for it is interwoven with the thread of the Scriptures and is testified to by observation and by the experience of every Christian but so clearly is it presented in this passage that it would be impossible for a candid man to evade its force were the other parts of scripture silent on the passage. Let anyone who is halting between two opinions on this point deliberately and with prayer examine this text and he will be brought to a decision unless his heart be steeled against conviction.

Delivered

At Conway 1825?

## Sermon 221 Danger of Lukewarm Christians

[Sermon No. 221, "Danger of Lukewarm Christians," Ezekiel 9:5-6, 1824 Sep,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 8]

Ezekiel 9:5-6

*And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary.*

*[He warns those who do not sigh and cry for the abominations of the world.]*

Among them all then none were to be spared but those who had the mark of God in their therefore heads. And none had this mark but those who sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem: in other words none but the sincere and faithful servants of God who in the midst of general declension had preserved their garments unspotted and their faith untarnished. They were men whose faith and firmness resisted the flood that overwhelmed all others.

But there were doubtless many others in that city who professed to be the friends of religion and whom the world accounted such. Yet God looked into the dark chambers of their souls and no sighs heaved their bosoms nor prayers went up from their lips for desolate Zion: but then he saw many a secret idol ardently worshiped and himself dethroned from a supremacy in the affections. Surely then there was nothing in their cases to prevent the besom of destruction from passing over them.

And thus has it been probably every age of the church. Many have had the form of godliness who have denied the power thereof. Many have been ranked by men with true believers whom God says to have been his enemies. In his eye - there exist among all men but two classes in regard to religion those who are really pious and those who are not. But to the eye of man even of Christians there have always been three classes - those who are manifestly and devotedly pious - those who are most obviously destitute of piety and a class between these concerning whom it seems difficult to decide whether they are the cold friends or the secret enemies of God. The day is not far distant however in which all will stand on the right hand or the left of their final Judge.

It seems that all those in Jerusalem who were the real children of God sighed and cried for the abominations that were done around them. Not one was in different. And indeed how could they be so? How could they see *the glory of the incorruptible God changed into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things?* How could they witness the divine character thus brutalized - the divine law thus trampled on - their heavenly friend and Father thus dishonoured and abused while at the same time they could not resist the flood of error and sin and not have their better feelings stored within them nor the sigh of regret heave their bosom nor their cries for the interposition awakened of heaven? If they could see all these abominations and remain indifferent surely they deserved most richly to feel the vengeance of an insulted God. In such a case not to be for God was to be against him. So he regarded it and diverted the ministers of his vengeance to spare none but those who had his mark on their foreheads. The Chaldeans who were these ministers when they carried away the ten tribes into captivity did spare no others. Among those spared we have

an account of Jeremiah Baruch and Ebed-melech: and doubtless others were of the number.

From this history I take occasion to say that in every declension of religion those who do not sigh and cry for the abominations committed around them have reason to expect the judgment of God. This is too obvious to need proof. For if man do not mourn and pray when the causes of God and the dearest interests of man are in jeopardy and they cannot withstand the flood nor scatter the darkness who will say that they really love the cause of Christ? A Christian in different to the declension and ruin of religion! No that cannot be! All who are indifferent to it when it seems to be sinking I repeat therefore have reason to expect the judgment of God.

1. They may expect temporal judgments. They may expect these not because God always punishes the disregard of religion in this world but because by their neglect they richly deserve those judgments. And many experience them too when ignorant of it – nay when what they call the favours of God are showered on them. The judgment which God often sends upon those who sigh not and cry not for the abominations of a wicked world is an uninterrupted course of worldly prosperity. They become rich or honoured or are able to gratify their every carnal desire as soon as it arises. Now such prosperity is generally regarded as a blessing; and had men a heart to use prosperity aright it would be prove such. But when bestowed on men whose hearts are fastened in the chains of sin it proves the sure means of uniting those chains forever. In other words God often gives men uninterrupted prosperity merely because he has abandoned them to their chosen way and left them to harden for destruction. How dreadful was that exclamation of Jehovah concerning the Jews, *Why should ye be stricken any more - ye will revolt more and more?* And more sure and effectual method of stealing the hearts of a certain description of men could not be taken then to give them all that heart could wish and let them join house to house and field to field. Why then is not prosperity in such instances a real and may I add a severe judgment?

Another temporal judgment God often sends on those who neither sigh nor cry when religion declines is to neglect to revive his works among them and to permit his church to become extinct and the ordinances of the Gospel to be removed from them. Neither do many men regard this as any great evil but rather as the removal of an unwelcome restraint upon their lusts. And yet when you learn how tremendous is this dispensation go and look upon the descendants of the seven churches in Asia - sunk at least as low as the heathen - go and take up your residence in the waste places of our land until you have learnt from the grossness and looseness of manners and morality and the insecurity of your reputation and property - the temple worth of the stated ordinances of the gospel. Remain there until you can return and cry and sigh when you see religion declining lest from you also the ordinances of religion be taken away. And you and your families be left to grow up ignorant of the name of Jesus and to die without God and without hope.

And my brethren let us remember that we little as we may think it are exposed to this very judgment as well as other societies. Only let religion continue to decline and alas it will demand but a short period until its power is gone - until nothing but the name and the profession remains and your religious institutions will vanish away almost imperceptibly. It is nothing I repeat it is nothing but a holy and devoted church that can preserve in any place the public institutions of the gospel.

2. Those who sigh not and cry not for the sins of a wicked world and for the declining cause of Christ have still more reason to fear the judgment of God in eternity. Then will be the time of righteous retribution. Many will escape in this world the wrath they deserve: but when this scene of things shall have its close impartial justice will seize her scales and persevering rebels will be declared to be wanting



- wanting in what God requires and in what is absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of heavenly felicity.

In this world the wrath of God has its mitigations and very rarely is it poured out without mixture. In every display of vindictive justice God exhibits here mercy and kind arm stays the thunder in mid volley. But when once the dominions of death are entered the executioners of justice will have their commission as in the text, *Go ye and smite: let not your eye spare neither have ye pity.* And why should any pity be shown to those who could see the name and cause of God on earth abused insulted and trodden from underfoot - his mercy set at nought and his judgments despise - his promises neglected and his threatenings treated with contempt and yet feel no awakened sensibilities - nor heave a sigh of regret nor send up a cry to God for assistance nor lift a finger to build up declining religion! Still more why should mercy be showed to those who joined in all this banded rebellion against heaven and themselves lent a hand to demolish the empire of God on earth and to erect the empire of sin and Satan. Why should mercy be shown herself to those over whom its stores had been lavished in this world and on whom the love displayed in the plan of redemption had fallen with no effort. No the judgment God will pass on such in eternity will be final - will be inexorable, will be irremediable, will be eternal - will be unspeakable.

1. It will be final. The scriptures everywhere represent the results of this probationary state to continue long as the throne of God. No subsequent state of trial is anywhere described which will give opportunity for a new decision. And it will be awarded too by the highest authority in the universe by God himself - from whom there is no appeal.

2. This judgment will be irreversible. *God is without any variableness or shadow of turning.* And he has given men to understand that willful and presevering neglect of his commands will incur his unchangeable indignation. What hope then that the awards of the judgment day can ever be reversed? Heaven and earth shall pass but one jot or tittle shall in wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled and all will not be fulfilled till the penalties of the law have their full and unmitigated infliction on the offender and who does not know that those penalties are endless?

What new motives can be presented to infinite knowledge what new views of the sinner's conduct to perfect justice - to induce Jehovah to reverse his final sentence of *depart thou cursed, etc.*

3. This judgment will be immediate. No power of men or angels no revolving periods of duration no prayers or tears or ground can mitigate by a single shade its severity. It is blackness of darkness forever. Not a ray of light can ever enter. Is it the worm that never dies? 'Twill never gnaw the less. Is it the fire that is never quenched? It will never be assuaged: for the wrath of God feeds it and sin deserves it. And yet how common is the delusion especially among those who have a name to live but are dead and those who build on their own morality - how common is it for such to fancy that somehow or other the threatenings of God can never be inflicted with that literal and unyielding severity in which they are presented in the scriptures. They fancy there will be some mitigation some yielding on the part of God some drop of water to cool the tongues of the wretched sufferers. But the unchangeable character of Jehovah when considered in connection with his threatenings in the scriptures render such an idea the very height of delusion. Were it man or an angel who had threatened we might hope for some alteration. But Jehovah can neither lie nor change.

4. This judgment will be eternal. This follows from the fact that it will be final irreversible and irremediable. But it is also expressly declared in the bible in language too plain to be mistaken. In vain will the wretched sufferer stretch his eyes and his thoughts forward and endeavour amid the ceaseless

round of ages to discover some glimpse of a termination to his agonies. Age after age and period after period as it passes will only drop on his ear that appalling word *eternity*. It is that word that will add a tenfold pang to the stings of a guilty conscience - it is this that will give the lash of memory and untold firmness - it is this that will paint on the imagination a thousand images more dreadful than poets yet have feigned or fear conceived and it is this that will give to the wrath of God a weight and a firmness that are intolerable.

Finally this judgment will be unspeakable. How can the magnitude of that curse and the bitterness of that agony be told which is called now a lake of fire and brimstone now the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God now an undying worm and now an unquenchable fire and is inflicted by a Being who is almighty and just and holy! It can never be described till it is felt and it never will be felt till eternity shall run out and that period can never come. Dreadful then as as our imaginations may picture the final judgment of God upon sinners it can never rise to the reality - it can never rise to the full import of the language of the bible.

Yet my hearers to such judgments both temporal and eternal are we exposed if we do not sigh and cry for the abominations around us in time of a declension of religion. No matter whether it be the minister at the altar or the professor at the Lord's table or the moral or the immoral world worldling - if we take no interest in the promotion of religion - if we mourn not over its declension - if we pray not for its revival we live constantly exposed to be abandoned of God and given over to reprobate minds - constantly exposed to have the ordinances of religion taken from us and constantly exposed to his eternal wrath.

But there is a way of escape. The door of repentance it may be hoped is not yet closed forever. The Saviour long suffering and gracious still bids us look to his bleeding cross and live. In one word let us awake to righteousness and sigh and cry in behalf of Zion from an honest and sincere heart - let us abandon our idols and there is yet hope. Thus and thus only may we turn away the judgments of God. The subject then urges us - a thousand motives urge us all to awake from our sleep and arise that Christ may give us life. While his judgments are yet suspended and have not burst upon us while conscience yet admonishes us and the institutions of religion remain and while we are yet in a world of hope and the world of torment is not our abode O let us seize the favourable the precious and perhaps the last moment for making our peace with God and giving up our hearts and our heads to the service of Jehovah. Thousands alas on whom these judgments have fallen and on whom they will rest forever. O thy Lord were he ever from the world of woe a warning voice to seize the present moment and not follow them where hope can never come that comes to all.

There is one direction in the commission given in the text to the ministers of God's vengeance that ought not to be passed unnoticed. Urging them to the works of indiscriminate slaughter he says, *and begin at my sanctuary*. As if he had said begin with those who having a form of godliness deny its power - those who profess to be my children but are at heart my enemies - begin with the priest at the altar if he have not my marks in his forehead - begin with my church who bear not that mark and make these my pretended friends the first examples of my vengeance.

But why begin at the sanctuary? Because there would be found those who had entered into a special and public covenant with God to be faithful to his cause and yet when religion declines instead of sighing and crying for the abominations around them they bring even into the sanctuary their vile idols and fall down before them.

Begin at my sanctuary. Yes, let those who dare be guilty of such hypocrisy as in name to confess me but in works deny me let them be first destroyed to show my marked displeasure against the hypocrite.

Begin at my sanctuary. Do such as have been admitted to the holy and delightful ordinances of the gospel and have sat down at the table of dying love do such remain unnumbered by all the love and tenderness they there meet. Thus hardened to feel first the righteous indignation of an insulted God.

Begin at my sanctuary. Yes - if those who have been admitted to the holy of holies and brought up in the courts of the Lord if such can be so ungrateful as sleep when the cause of God is suffering and failing surely that ingratitude deserves some special token of divine disapprobation.

But my hearers if judgment begin at the house of God and the professed righteous be destroyed where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? He may not indeed have to answer for broken vows and hypocritical professions but he must answer for neglecting to yield his heart to the power of the gospel. He must answer for ten thousand neglected opportunities for resistance to the Spirit of God - for trampling under foot the blood of Christ and for a whole life spent in willful opposition to the commands of Jehovah. What then though the hypocrite may sink under a weight of condemnation heavier than he: yet his doom will be as certain - his will be final irreversible irremediable eternal and unspeakable. Oh yes and Sodom and Gomorrah Chorazin and Bethsaida may draw near and *smile to find their doom more tolerable than his* who goes down to destruction from this Gospel land.

Delivered

At Conway September 1824

At Conway February 1836

At Hadley Mills January 17 1830

At Amherst College July 1 1832

At Hampton Connecticut September 1835

At Amherst West Parish February 7 1835

At Leverett July 1838

## Sermon 223 Ingratitude to Christ

[Sermon No. 223, "Ingratitude to Christ," Jeremiah 2:2, 1824 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 8]

Jeremiah 2:2

*Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.*

*[Hitchcock speaks at length about declining fervor of religious beliefs over time including decline in love of a spouse.]*

Ingratitude has always been regarded as one of the best basest of crimes. Yet if we search the history of man we shall find that none is so common. I speak not of ingratitude towards our fellow men but of ingratitude towards God. And from the days of Adam to this no individual has passed through life - nay through a single day without being guilty of it. For who was ever sufficiently grateful to God for the mercies of a single day of his life?

The history of the Jews is little else than a history of national ingratitude. No nation under heaven had received such peculiar and distinguished privileges: yet their perverse and unfeeling abuse of them seem to have risen in proportion as they were blessed. What murmurings in the wilderness - what ingrateful efforts to rid themselves of the government of God - what indifference and even dissatisfaction did they manifest under the reception of the greatest mercies! It is ingratitude that the prophet charges upon them in the text. When suffering in the wilderness they had professed great love for God; yet now they were wandering far away from him and had forgotten him. God in the tenderest manner reproves them for this. He addresses them like a kind friend who may have been deeply wounded by their perverseness and tells them he has not forgotten their former protestations of attachment and the warmth of their zeal and thus does he lead them to compare their former fondness and zeal for him and his cause with their present alienation forgetfulness and opposition. If there remained in their hearts one lingering emotion of love such an appeal must have wounded them deeply.

This appeal may be made and is made to the whole church of God: for Israel was in fact the church and whenever any in after times should be guilty of the like ingratitude whether Jew or Gentile bond or free the same language might be made to tell upon their consciences.

It is my intention on this occasion my Christian brethren to direct this appeal to you. I did not say it is applicable to us all and perhaps it is to none of us. But the fact is most professing Christians can look back upon the period when they felt an attachment much more ardent in their Redeemer than afterwards. The text directs us to the period of their first arrival of their faith in Christ - when they were first espoused to him as the time when they manifested the strongest attachment. An allusion is here made as is frequently done in scripture to the tender relation of marriage to illustrate the union between Christ and the believer. And our thoughts are also directed to those most unfrequent instances when that tender affection manifested and felt toward one another by those who enter into the marriage covenant when first they were espoused at length dies away and is succeeded by the cold casualness and ungrateful indifference of one of the parties. In short the text seems to spare multiplied

allusions of a tender character in order to make the charge of ingratitude enter the hard heart of those who have abused their best benefactor.

Yes my brethren is not Christ our best benefactor? *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet God commandeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.* He has borne the curse of the broken law and purchased for us everlasting joys and that too when we did not deserve the least mercy at his hands: but rather from fiery indignation. And in return for his love and sacrifices he only asks of us a correspondent love and willingness to follow him bearing our cross and assuring us that a crown of glory awaits us. And brethren when we first hopefully consecrated ourselves to God did he not feel a willingness and a resolution and make a promise thus to love and serve our Redeemer? Did we not feel like Peter who exclaimed, *Though I should die with thee yet will I not deny thee?* Turn your eyes back upon the day of your espousals to your Redeemer: remember the kindness of your spiritual you and compare your exercises and conduct then with your exercises and conduct now. Christ remembers how you loved and served him then; and he knows how you love and serve him now. He addresses you not in the language of indignant reproach but of tender expostulation - not as your almighty Judge who wields in his hands the thunderbolts of heaven: but as a friend - an elder brother - deeply pained by your ingratitude in abandoning him and his cause after bringing yourselves by the strongest of all ties to love him supremely and to serve him with a constant willing and everlasting service.

I ask you then brethren and to look back upon your religious exercises and actions in former days, and to compare them with your present state.

We may remember that the time perhaps when the sabbath was to us really a day of holy rest and holy joy. So strong did the current of our feelings run towards heaven that there was no room for worldly thoughts and desires. In the morning our prayer

*In holy duties let the day  
In holy pleasures pass away.*

And in the evening our song was

*How sweet a sabbath thus to spend  
In hope of one that ne'er shall end!*

*[Source: Hymn by J. Stennett, 1732]*

There was a real fervency in our petitions to God – a real pleasure in meditations upon divine truth. While we read the scriptures and mused upon them the fire burned in our hearts. No languor settled upon our bosoms when we listened to the soul humbling and soul reviving truths of the bible from the pulpit: and our ardent desires ascended with the voice of public prayer without distraction.

Such fervency of spirit and sincere love of religious duties were acceptable to God: and our Redeemer smiled approbation upon us. But do not our sabbath day exercises now seem very different? Do not our performances of religious duties appear to be almost entirely formal engaged in because we think they are duties rather than because we love them or derive pleasure from them? Do not worldly thoughts intrude most vexatiously into our minds even in the most solemn addresses to heaven and prevent all fervency in our petitions? Does divine truth make much impression upon our hearts and do we not reflect if we reflect at all upon the character of God and our Redeemer almost without having the emotions of love or gratitude or reverence within us? (In short is not the sabbath with us apart from the curiosity excited within us to examine one another's dress and appearance - seem to us one of the

dullest of the seven days of the week?) If these things be so how painful a picture do we present to the eyes of our God and Redeemer. *They remember the kindness of our youth the love of our espousals* and when they compare these with our present state of alienation and coldness while on their part they have remained unchangeably the same loving us with an everlasting love and crowning our lives with mercy - O how hateful is that ingratitude which they discover in us!

We may also brethren remember the time when sin appeared to us much more odious than it now does. The holiness and purity of the Divine character was impressed on us in such greater distinctness and we saw its irreconcilable opposition to sin. The flame of holiness also burnt bright in our own hearts and discovered to us more strikingly the bleakness of sin. We saw and felt it to be our mortal enemy and the enemy of God and of all the universe and we would not consent even to a parlay with it. We resolved to wage with it a war of extermination: and while we took hold with a resolute hand to tear it away from its hold upon our hearts and searched it with a penetrating glance into its hidden recesses dragging its forth to the day light we lifted up our voices to God and cried mightily for help. We earnestly longed we resolutely determined to be rid of this body of death. The consequence of such lively views of sin was a great tenderness of conscience. We dared not allow ourselves in the least sin. We were extremely jealous lest we should approach us in some alluring form and we even refrained from many things lest we should be betrayed into a violation of holy law of God. We avoided even the appearance of evil. And a consequence of this tenderness of conscience was a deep and a lively sense of our own depravity. We had torn off the disguises from our hearts and saw their hidden pollutions - their strong inclinations to depart from the living God and the view produced in us deep humility. We regarded ourselves as the least of all saints and not worthy to be called the children of God. This sense of depravity produced in us a powerful and abiding impression of our view of divine grace and dependance upon God. We saw that if we were saved it would not be by works of righteousness which we had *done but by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

But do we my brethren still return this deep sense of the hatefulness of sin of the plague of our own hearts and that tenderness of conscience which leads us to walk circumspectly and that sense of need and dependance that draws us with fervent importunity to the throne of grace? Are we not prone to make some compromises with sin and to give ourselves a little license in what we call innocent pleasures - as if anything could be harmless that does not promote the glory of God. The fear of singularity did not once prevent us from resolutely refusing conformity to the world: but do not its captivating allurements tempt us to yield a little and to regard ourselves as once unnecessarily rigid? Does sin appear so odious in our eyes as formally? And do we ourselves appear to have hearts of desperate wickedness? We acknowledge as much no doubt speculatively: but do our hearts feel as deeply on the subject? And when the cross of Christ is brought to our recollection on which the horrid nature of sin and man's deep wickedness letters are marked in letters of blood - to have but a feeble sense of sin with a bleeding Saviour before us how does such ingratitude plant another crown of thorns upon his head and force another spear into his side.

Christian Brethren I have here touched upon a subject that once awakened in our hearts the most sincere and ardent emotions - I mean the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ - for our sins. We lay perishing in our iniquities. The curse of a broken law pealed in our ears with its awful thunders. Our hard hearts were braced and steeled against heaven and the justice of God urged our execution. We were without God and without hope at length we were made to see our desperate condition. A guilty conscience shot lightning into our souls and we saw the thunderbolt of divine vengeance following its course. We saw the gates of heaven barred against us and the gates of hell opening to receive us and their infernal hinges turning - grating harsh thunder and disclosing the blackness of darkness that was just ready to

envelop us forever. We threw a despairing look around us and stretched an imploring hand and sent up an agonizing cry to heaven for help. The vision of an expiring Saviour met her our eyes and growing upon the solemn sight we felt the enmity of our hearts dissolving and flowing away like water. We felt the fire of divine love kindling up in our bosoms - the gates of hell closed with a murmur we heard as the expiring Saviour explained it is finished and we saw the portals of heaven *on golden hinges turning* half unfold to admit us. In short if not deceived we rose renovated beings - new creatures in Christ Jesus. We threw our arms around the cross of our expiring Lord and bathed his pierced feet with tears of gratitude and joy. Gladly we took up his cross and set forward to follow him through evil report and good report. We could not have believed if that love so sincere and ardent as ours should ever cool - that resolutions so strong should ever be broken. We could not believe that we should ever wish to return into the horrible pit and mirey clay of this world from which he had plucked us. We could not have believed that we could ever be harbour base ingratitude to such a Saviour. But does not that Saviour as he points us back to *the kindness of our youth when we went after him in the wilderness of this world* - does he not compel us to acknowledge that we have made such an unkind return. Well may he enquire of us where is the love of your youth - where that ardent attachment - that flaming zeal what you fancied many waters could not quench. Once you could not look upon my cross without having your eyes filled with tears: but now you can leave your Saviour to struggle along with his murderers and not only so but even plant another crown of thorns on his head and urge another spear into his body.

Can you ever forget brethren the day of your espousal to Christ? The day when you first probably took the vows of the Lord upon you and sat down to his table of love? How solemn how tender how joyful that season! How lively and impressive the emblems of your saviour's sacrifice that were on that day broken to you! With what mingled emotions of tenderness and love gratitude faith and hope did you then eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man! With what unspoken resolutions did you enter into covenant with your God and Redeemer. How did you your faith rise above the allurements of the world and you seem to trample them all under your feet! How strong were your desires and your prayers after holiness after a perfect conformity to the will of God! And with what lively anticipation did you look forward to the day when you should eat bread and drink wine with your Saviour in his heavenly kingdom! We need brethren only look back to that first communion season and compare it with that we now celebrate in order to be overwhelmed with a sense of our ingratitude.

Still let us keep our thoughts turned back to the early periods of our Christian course and compare our feelings then towards our fellow man with our feelings now. When newly brought out of the darkness of nature into the marvelous light of the Gospel (as we humbly hoped) we saw and felt something of the value of the immortal soul and from our own past experience we knew how insensible impenitent men are of their own danger. We saw them asleep on the very brink of everlasting perdition - risking their eternal interests for a paltry petulance of this world's trash. We were deeply and sincerely distressed for them. We went to them and took hold of them to shake them from their slumbers but finding theirs the sleep of spiritual death we next went with earnest importunity to that God whose Spirit alone can break the sinner's iron slumbers and besought him with strong crying and tears to appear in their behalf (of the self-deluded millions of our race). Many a time did we enter into our closets and having shut the door pray to our Father in heaven that he would have mercy on sinners. All private resentments were forgotten and we could pray with intense earnestness for the bitterest enemy we had on earth. But what now are our feelings and conduct in regard to the souls of others who are destitute of religion? How painful to compare the little interest we now take in the eternal welfare of such and the few prayers we now offer up for them and the few efforts we make by direct personal address to awaken them with the zeal and faithfulness and anxious distress and fervent prayers of former days! How ungrateful does the comparison prove us to that Saviour who loved us and died for us that we might

love one another - and plead his merits at the throne of grace for others that know him not!

I might run on this parallel between the kindness of our youth and our present ingratitude so as to touch on every exercise and action. But I have leave it to your own meditations to him as in the picture. I only add a general remark that in those days when religion shone brightest in our hearts and lives we felt and acted as if religion were the grand business of life and is if everything else must be made subservient to it. The glory of God was the polestar by which we regulated our course. But with many of us now that we wander away from our Saviour does it not appear as if to obtain riches and honors and worldly distinctions and pleasures were the grand business of life - do we not make it the grand business of life - and instead of the glory of God do we not set up self is the leading object to which everything else is made to bend and do homage and service? If we are thus guilty how black the stain of our ingratitude towards our Saviour whose commandments we have solemnly covenanted to keep!

Perhaps however brethren some of you cannot look back to any former period in which the flame of holy love burnt brighter on the altar or your hearts than it now does. Your path may have been like the shining light shining more and more to the perfect day and your hearts may at this moment be as warm in the love and hands as active in the service of your Redeemer as at any former period. If so I bid you God speed and (and cheerfully do I break to you the emblems of that living bread which came down from heaven). But it is probable that many of us are compelled to look back to the kindness of our youth toward Christ and remember with tears of contrition the love of our espousals so much more ardent than that which now like dying embers scarcely warms our bosoms. But to arouse such from their lukewarm state and kindle anew the expiring flame of love I present none of the terrors of divine indignation. No, I have a more powerful instrument to assail you with. It is the long-suffering kindness and bleeding love of the Saviour. Roused with just indignation for our ungrateful requital of his favours, we might indeed expect to see him girding on the sword of justice and clothing himself in flaming fire to consume us. But no: he only tells us in the tender language of a friend to look back and remember the *kindness of our youth and the love of our espousals*. He only holds up before us the picture of our cruel ingratitude and bids us look at it if we can and not have our frozen hearts melted into love and contrition. He bares his fist his hands and his side which we have pierced anew by our sins and while the blood streams from his wounds he bids us behold what we have done to the best of friends (and the kindest of Saviours). Nay he spreads before us the table of his dying love and bids us sit down to it and taste the richness and freeness of his love and to come polluted as we are and wash away the black stain of ingratitude in his very hearts blood which he poured out for us. And if all this does not subdue us he lays bare his bosom in bids us by eating and drinking unworthily as we have done to plunge the dagger into the heart of the kindest of friends. Do you feel your hearts begin to melt under such a tender appeal? It shows that there is a spark of spiritual life not quite extinguished. Oh seize the precious moment to fan it into a flame that shall never again be put out.

Delivered

At Conway March 7 1824

At Buckland Oct 1824

At Amherst College October 1832

At Amherst College April 1843

At Amherst West Parish June 1835

At Deerfield April 9<sup>th</sup> 1843



At Bloody Brook October 1 1843

At Amherst College November 1846

At Amherst West Parish January 1851 (or 1861?)

## Sermon 224: Manner in Which God Hardens Sinners

[Sermon No. 224, "Manner in Which God Hardens Sinners," Romans 9:18, 1824 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 9]

Romans 9:18

*Whom he will he hardeneth.*

An expectation may be excited by the mention of such a text as this that I am about attempting to discuss some of those questions that have been raised in every age upon this assertion of the apostle - for instance as how man can be a free agent if God exerts a positive influence to harden him? And how he can be to blame for doing what God compels him to do? You may expect me to draw out in colours which to the unholy heart appears dark and disgusting, that absolute sovereignty of the Divine government which is exhibited in the chapter containing this passage. But important as such enquiries may be in their proper place I have a more important view of the subject to present at this time: I mean a practical view. If any of your minds are already filled with objections and difficulties upon these profound subjects I ask you to dismiss them all and soberly to attend to the simple fact asserted in the text that God hardens the heart. I do not mean by this form of expression to assert or deny that God cements a positive influence in hardening men. I wish to leave such questions out of the enquiry. I say that God hardens individuals merely because the text uses this form of expression without intending to intimate an opinion whether the language is to be understood literally or needs modification. I feel that it is safe to use the language of the bible but if any dislike it let them find if they can better words of expression. It is the fact whether accomplished directly or instrumentally to which I ask your attention and as to the fact no observing man can doubt.

It is alas a most common object to see men who are unquestionably hardened or hardening in sin on whom religious truths make but a feeble impression and whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil. Many others also whose depravity does not break forth into open acts of wickedness appear to the observing eye and sometimes acknowledge themselves to be sunk into a state of desperate insensibility in regard to their souls - whom no terrors can alarm and no promises allure. There can be little doubt that such persons are really and truly hardened - perhaps as a just punishment for their neglect or offered mercy and abuse of privileges. And it is my object in the further consideration of this subject to exhibit some of the most usual modes in which to use the language of the text God hardens men.

And here let it be premised that God in his government of the world has instituted has a great variety of powerful means whose intention and material tendency is to lead man to the love and the practice of holiness. But if this tendency is resisted if any do not improve under these means they become instrumental of confirming such in sin and of rendering them callous to religious impressions. It is as true of every means of grace as of the gospel that if it prove not a savour of life unto life it proves a savour of death unto death. If God cannot be glorified in the salvation of men he will have glory in their condemnation.

But to premise the subject in order I observe in the first place that God hardens some by a religious

education.

He brings them into being in the very home of piety. Religion rocks their infant cradle and while they sleep on its pillows the fervent daily prayer rises in their behalf from their watching parents. They are taught early to lisp the names of their God and their Redeemer and to send up the morning and evening prayer to heaven. They learn early to read the word of God and its glorious truths are assiduously instilled into their minds. For a time - perhaps for years - their hearts seem to soften and to grow better under the salutary instructions they receive. But depravity gathers strength – and at length stifles the voice of conscience and the earnest prayers and pleading solicitations of anxious parents are resisted and the heart of the child hardened against conviction. He feels no compunctions when a father or a mother remonstrates with him upon his evil ways: he remains unmoved when they represent to him the pressing danger he is in of eternal ruin. Positive disgust perhaps arises within him when his ingratitude and perverseness are set before him and he looks upon his Christian friends as enthusiastical; and puffed up with self complacency and blinded by security, he resolves in spite of every expostulation and warning to pursue his chosen way. In short it is obvious to Christians around him that God is preparing him for a vessel of wrath; and since he has slighted the rich favour of a religious education that very education is permitted to be the means of hardening him in sin. He cannot now feel on the subject of religion if he would: for that Holy Spirit he has so long resisted has abandoned him to his chosen way. Those kind parental institutions, which once, through the cooperating influences of the Holy Spirit, produced a tender solicitude for the salvation of his soul, now, because that Spirit no longer cooperates, makes no impression or excite opposition and irritation.

*[New page inserted.]*

In the second place God hardens some by their literary education.

Beyond all question accurate and profound knowledge is the friend of religion. But it is not all knowledge that is accurate or profound: and as Lord Bacon remarks a smattering of philosophy is apt to lead a man into atheism whereas a thorough acquaintance with that will bring him back again to religion. The danger there lies in the early stages of education while the student is employed only upon the elements of literature and science. But to himself - especially if naturally self-converted - he seems while yet climbing up the threshold to have already searched and examined the penetralia of the temple of science. And he is the more apt to entertain this opinion just in proportion as his early education has been defective because he is so much the less qualified to judge on the immense field that is beyond him! He soon fancies himself wise enough to see the absurdity and weakness of the religious opinions and superstitious observances of his seniors who for 20 or 30 years have been slowly toiling along the road of induction up the steep hill of science (and who seem to themselves much less farther advanced than they did at the end of the first or the second collegiate year). His mind is not so contracted: at a single leap he places himself far above the plodding multitude and set himself up as an oracle in opposition to antiquated religious opinions. The rush light of his own reason seems to shine more bright than the sunlight of the bible because his eye is too weak to bear the light of that sun. Erelong the most fatal and deadly errors in religion seem to him most palpable truths and pride of opinion covers him with so thick a shield that the arrows of truth cannot penetrate it: and under such circumstances no matter how deep and thorough his literary knowledge becomes even if it be a knowledge of the bible: for every avenue to his heart is closed. He has abused his literary education and God has employed it as an instrument for hardening him in sin and fitting him for final and awful ruin.

Upon other students the same dreadful result follows from the incessant occupation which literary

pursuits afford their minds. Whether they love or hate believe or disbelieve religion they can hardly tell: for they have never found time to enquire seriously into its truth and reality. Distinction - literary distinction - distinction in college - distinction in a profession - these are the fairy phantoms that occupy continually the whole field of their vision and make them willing almost without a thought to lose their souls. The six days of labour surely it is right they should appropriateness with untiring industry to their regular and severe intellectual labours and surely it would be superstitious to sample to devote the hours of the sabbath to a perusal of the play or the poem the newspaper or periodical or even the new romance so full of excellent moral sentiments. And thus almost without thinking of God and religion many the young man become as thoroughly hardened in sin and as ripe for a deep bed in hell as the most daring outlaw upon earth. A deep place in perdition he must indeed have who thus perverts so rich a blessing as a public education to his destruction. Alas, alas, the dreadful process is going on in our midst with fatal certainty while those under its power are totally unconscious of the paralysis that has seized already upon their moral sensibilities.

Thirdly, God hardens some by prosperity.

Few men indeed have an idea that they enjoy much prosperity in this world. Even the fortunate meet with many disappointments for if they did not their insatiable desires would not be contented with acquiring the whole of this world; but like the tyrant of old they would sigh for other worlds to conquer. But if men who are in general prosperous - whose health continues poor few abatements - whose plans usually prove successful and whose property and friends are continued to them - if such persons would just look around them to compare their situation with that of multitudes who are painfully and deeply afflicted (and of such spectacles the world is full) they would be forced to confess that they enjoy if not as much prosperity as they could wish yet much more than others - and that they are comparatively at least prosperous man. And I wish now particularly to induce such persons to recollect that this prosperity is in many instances the very instrument by which God is hardening their hearts for destruction. It cannot be denied that that the natural effect of prosperity upon the corrupt heart of man is to induce him to neglect religion - to pull him up with a sense of his own importance and lead him to forget his dependance upon God: so that too often we are compelled to say of the prosperous man: *thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.* What then has the irreligious man reason to fear when his possessions and reputation increase year after year and no adverse stroke comes upon him while he continues careless and unconcerned about his soul? He ought to fear that God has left him to close up the avenues of conviction. Whether he fears it or not it is certain that he is becoming callous - that he is hardening in sin and unbelief and is abandoned by the special influences of the Spirit. But why do I waste my strength in prolonging this part of my subject. For of all irreligious men those who have become callous through worldly prosperity are the most unlikely to hear the voice that would warn them of their danger: or if they do hear for a moment like the man who by extraordinary effort is awakened from a lethargy it is only that they may sink back again into a deeper than ever sleep. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a first rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

Fourthly God hardens some by Adversity.

If the natural tendency of prosperity is to lead corrupt man away from God it is equally evident that the tendency of adversity is to lead him to God. It reminds us inevitably of the uncertainty and transient nature of every earthly possession and of the importance of having some other foundation on which the soul may rest amid the coming storms of life and death. Adversity then is a loud and powerful

admonition from heaven to the irreligious man to reform his ways and turn to God. It is expressly declared to be an indication of love on the part of God when he afflicts men: *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*. It is just such an expression of love as the father displays towards his child when he chastises him: and what is the effect on the child if the chastisement does not break his will and lead him to reformation? Certainly it increases his stubbornness and places him at a still greater remove from amendment. And a like effect inevitably follows upon the man who is not subdued and reformed by the trials God brings upon him. They stupefy his moral feelings: and shut up many avenues of conviction that can never be opened again but by a miracle. If afflictions be powerful when used as an instrument of bringing man to God it is no less powerful when used to harden their hearts against God. It may not produce such an open opposition to God as prosperity. But it as effectively rivets the soul in sin and as it were hammers it down into a hardness like adamant.

My hearers this is an alarming part of the subject to most of us: for most of us have been afflicted and now the solemn enquiry is whether we have improved by our trials? I do not ask whether we have not thereby been led to adopt some minor reformations: but has adversity wrought within us a thorough change of feeling and conduct? It is very easy for those of us who are sensible that we were destitute of religion when the affliction visited us to determine whether such was the effect. We have only to ask whether it produced our conversion to God. If it did not it follows conclusively that it served to harden us. Suppose we lived before the trial without a habit of prayer: then if the affliction did not lead us to pray habitually it is certain that our hearts were hardened by it. Suppose we disregarded the ordinances of religion or the word of God: then if we were not brought to attend to these our hearts were made worse by the affliction – and suppose we indulged a hope of heaven at the time but had neglected to come to the table of the Son: then if the trial did not lead us either to abandon our hope or profess religion it rendered us more insensible and drew over our eyes a thicker veil of self deception than ever.

Now if we find upon examination that we have hardened our hearts in the day of adversity let us remember the awakening declaration of Jehovah, *He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy*. Think of the expression *shall suddenly be cut off! Shall be cut off without remedy!* Destruction not only awaits such but it is a sudden destruction a destruction without remedy! Who among us is in this fearful condition?

Fifthly God hardens some by faithful preaching.

The apostle says, *we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death and to the other the savour of life unto life*. This passage teaches us that the gospel when plainly and forcibly preached has a hardening as well as a saving influence. Its effect is to push men away from that middle line between sinners and saints on which very many would fain stand because it is agreeable to their worldly interests and it drives them asunder – the one into an attitude of bolder defiance and more open opposition to God and the other into an attitude of firmer friendship for God and a bolder taking up of the cross of Christ. Multitudes however while sitting year after year under a fruitful exhibition of Gospel truth have not the most distant (faintest) idea that such efforts are realized in their own case. They have a feeling as if they were merely in a state of halting between two opinions: and that the preaching they hear exerted no influence of importance upon them. Nay perhaps they have but little respect for the preacher they hear and were never persuaded by him to receive or reject any religious opinion and therefore they fancy his sermons have no influence over them. But if such a man exhibits the truths of the gospel an effect a tremendous effect is exerted upon these very men - however little they may respect the instrument through which the truth is evolved upon them and however weak may in reality be his powers. They do

not hear a sermon nor a prayer but it hardens the covering of their hearts the casement in which their hearts are lodged and thus renders it more improbable that the arrows of truth will ever penetrate to the conscience.

The fact is it is by the truths of the gospel as an instrument that God in almost every case perhaps in every case convinces and converts men. And if they can resist a plain and forcible expression of those truths once why may they not a second time - third time - or hundred times? It is true God can and does sometimes make his truth more forcible than at another but we have no right to calculate upon this and experience shows that when men once resist a fair and a pungent exhibition of the Gospel they are rarely converted. And the counsel many men pursue is this. When the doctrines of the Gospel are at first presented before them in their simplicity and power or rather when they are presented in such a manner that their cavils and doubts concerning the truth are removed then they do feel alarmed at their lost condition and begin to ask solicitously what they must do to be saved. The more closely and faithfully the preacher applies the word under such circumstances the more do they command him and approve him. But being unwilling to make an unreserved surrender of themselves in the hands of sovereign mercy they resist their convictions and by the end of the world they gradually rid themselves of every vestige of anxiety about their souls and when the same doctrines and duties are pressed upon them again they fancy the preacher unnecessarily severe or doubts arise in their minds concerning the truth of the doctrine and at length they settle down into perfect sermon proof hearers. No threatening however awful alarms them no expostulations can shake them from the ground on which they are resting. The truth is their hearts are hardening under the preaching of the Gospel and there is scarcely a gleam of probability that it will ever be otherwise. They have resisted the influence of divine truth once: and since they will not glorify God by turning to him with their whole hearts God is now glorifying himself by fitting them to become more conspicuous monuments of wrath. Fifthly God hardens some by unfaithful preaching or corrupt writings.

The scriptures tell us of some who are *given up to strong delusions to believe a lie that they might be damned who had not pleasure in the truth*. Such persons it seems are thus given up because they have abused and resisted the truth and are unworthy to have it continued to them. And when this happens God sometimes sends to them men who pervert the Gospel of Christ and *privily bring in damnable heresies even denying the Lord that bought them* or he throws in their way some unprincipled writer. Supported and encouraged by their minister or their favourite author, men are thus left to imbibe violent prejudices against the truth and *to become exceedingly mad against it*. They speedily cast off the fear of God and restrain prayer before him and are given up to become blinder and blinder deeper and deeper with a most rapid progress. They are soon absolutely shielded against religious impressions and no human voice can break the deep spell that enchains their souls. In no other way probably are men hardened against God so soon so certainly do effectually and yet so utterly unknown to themselves.

Finally God hardens some by a revival of religion.

When the natural sun shines brightest and warmest upon the earth two effects are produced upon substances exposed to its rays. Some are melted and some are hardened. Just so it is when the Sun of righteousness pours his meridian beams upon any particular region. Some hearts are melted and some are hardened.

<Asterisk> [A single additional paragraph is inserted here]

No example illustrates this declaration so strictly as that of the convicted sinner who reverts again to a state of stupidity. Though the heart seemed for a while to be melting under the influence of truth yet was it nothing but the drying up of those natural sympathies and desires which keep open the avenues to the heart: and when these sympathies and desires are so evaporated and those avenues closed nothing remains but concentrated adamantine hardness.

Upon others the hardening effect of a revival is not so obvious until the work has ceased. For during a revival there are but few who do not feel a degree of anxiety. But ere long those whose hearts remain unmelted begin to know that they do not stand in the same relation to religion as they did before. It is obvious that they are thrown off many a degree into the icy region of stupidity and opposition and that the fetters of prejudice are wound closer around their souls and riveted more strongly.

And the same hardening effect is manifest in many who have no idea themselves that any effect has been produced. But the minister of the gospel sees it when the most powerful appeals he can make produce no impression upon the heart but rebound is if from adamant - when the law of God with its eternal thunders held over their heads is unheard and disregarded and when in spite of every warning and exhortation and promise in spite of the golden joys of heaven and the fiery agonies of hell the same leaden slumber presses upon their eyelids and the same callous covering is over their hearts.

My hearers this is a fearful subject. We have lived and still live under that system of divine discipline which when it does not soften the heart and lead it to God inevitably hardens and alienates it. If God is not preparing us for heaven by the various means of grace we enjoy he is assuredly by the same means preparing us for hell. We may imagine that we are stationary in regard to religion. That we are neither becoming better nor worse: but it is not so - God has so constituted his government over us that it is morally impossible for us to stand still. He has determined that if we will not glorify him by our unreserved consecration of ourselves to his service he will glorify himself in our destruction. So long as we live in impenitence and neglect of the divine commands it is not for us to say that the means of grace under which we live shall not have a hardening effect. They will - they must have that effect: for it is in their very nature to do it. And if you find yourselves in unawakened and unalarmed amid mercies and afflictions - and every other means of grace - if you find yourselves no near the possession of religion at the end of the week or the month than at the beginning - if neither the terrors nor the promises of the gospel awaken you to see your danger and if you remember that you have attended in the house of God for five or ten or twenty or thirty years without having produced any essential change in your hearts - then let me solemnly ask every person in this assembly whether it is not probable - whether he is not hardening - whether he is not hardening in sin and that God is fitting him for a vessel of wrath! Arouse then unconverted sinners arouse from this horrid lethargy and burst from this murderous delusion in which you are dreaming away the few short remaining hours of probation. Break away from the chain that binds you in the embrace of sin and let the chains of religion bind you to the love of the Saviour.

Delivered

At Wrentham May 1839

At Conway February 29 1826

At Conway May 13 1827?

At Muddy Brook June 1826

At Deerfield June 1839

At Northampton December 1827  
At Amherst West Parish January 1828  
At Amherst West Parish October 1840  
At Amherst College April 1828  
At Amherst College April 1834  
At Amherst College October 1838  
At Hampton Connecticut September 1829  
At School Meadow February 1830  
At Yarmouth September 5 1830  
At Concord September 20 1830  
At Boston Park St. January 9 1831  
At Hatfield November 1831  
At Leverett April 1832  
At Amherst North Parish December 1 1832  
At Sunderland July 1834  
At Amherst East Parish October 1836  
At Falmouth September 1839



## Sermon 225 Oneness of Christians

[Sermon No. 225, "Oneness of Christians," John 17:21, 1824 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 9]

John 17:27

*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me,  
and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.*

There is one feature in the visible church of Christ that is all in almost every age since his advent has been looked upon by the unbeliever with increasing triumph and by many a sincere enquirer with anxiety. They have seen that church separated into numerous divisions distinguished by many striking peculiarities. And since those things in which different denominations disagree are necessarily made more prominent than those in which they coincide the superficial observer and the prejudiced sceptic are led to the conclusion that there is nothing common and nothing certain in the Christian religion. Unacquainted themselves with the power of religion - with the secret but substantial process of experimental piety - they are apt to regard the essence of Christianity as consisting of externals and when they see so many separate and independent denominations widely differing in these respects what could be expected with their feelings but they should regard the gospel as a mass of wax easily made to assume any shape desired.

It becomes then an interesting enquiry whether Christianity be in fact a system thus uncertain and destitute of fixed principles or whether beneath numerous external peculiarities and diversities there may not be discovered some common and unchangeable principles in which all real disciples of Christ agree? Such a oneness as this is certainly recognized in the text. And what higher authority can we produce. For it is a part of the prayer of Christ for his disciples uttered in the immediate view of the agonies awaiting him. He supplicates that all these to the end of time may be one as he and the Father are one. He and the Father are one in nature - one in council - one in desire - one in action and of such a character does he plead with God his Father may be the union of all his followers. And who doubts that the prayers of Christ have received or will receive an answer? Especially may we conclude with certainty that such is the fact in the present case. For the sacred writers declare in a great variety of ways that there is a oneness among all the true disciples of Christ of a character like that prayed for by the Saviour. Even Paul who tells us often of one declaring himself to be a follower of Paul another of Apollos and another of Cephas and another of Christ informs us also that *as we have many members in one body and all the members have not the same office: So we (that is Christians) being many are one body in Christ and every one members one of another.* He also says that *as the body is one and hath many members and all the members of that one body being many are one body so also in Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into our body whether we be Jews or Gentiles whether we be bond or free and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* Again he says, *For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* In short no one can read the epistles of Paul who does not perceive that the idea of a oneness in the true church of Christ pervades the whole.

It is my intention in this discourse to attempt a description of this oneness. In other words I wish to

point out those leading characteristics by which all real Christians are designated in which all of every age nation and condition agree however distinguished by minor peculiarities.

*[Inserted paragraph]*

I speak of Christians in ordinary circumstances and having the light of the gospel. Whether in extraordinary circumstances God may not give and some a right state of heart who have no definite idea of some of the doctrines essential for those to believe who have the bible I shall not undertake to decide. I refer in this argument to the great mass of the Christian countries who have given decisive evidence of real piety and shall attempt to discover those points of faith and practice in which they have agreed.

But in discussing this subject the mere declaration of any man or set of men that they are Christians will not be admitted as proof that they are so: for Christ has given us a better rule of judgment - *by their fruits ye shall know them*. Nor in considering these fruits will a were worldly morality which a heathen philosopher might have practiced be regarded as alone sufficient to prove a man possessed of a principle of holiness without which no one shall see the Lord. For no man possessed a purer or more elevated worldly morality than the young ruler to whom Christ said that he yet lacked one essential thing. Fortunately we have a sure word of prophecy to which we can appeal on the subject and those same scriptures which describe the unity of Christians tell us in what that unity consists.

In the first place, Christians are one in the essential articles of their faith.

Let it be distinctly kept in mind that I speak here of the new fundamentals of the Gospel. For it is well known that in regard to points of less importance real believers have entertained different views. Errors of any kind have indeed many unhappy influences upon a man's religious character and serve to obscure his christian graces. But as every wound upon the human body is not fatal so there are areas in belief which if sincerely embraced may not ruin the soul. There are points upon which it is possible for those to differ whose hearts are essentially right. There are also principles in revealed religion which to deny and disbelieve is to reject the gospel itself and jeopardize the soul. If there do not exist any such principles then it follows that it is not possible to determine in what the religion of the bible consists since it has no principles that are peculiar to itself - none concerning which persons may not differ and yet be Christians. But in these essentials Christians of every age nation and rank have agreed and will continue to agree to the end of time.

The truth of this declaration we must admit or deny that any principle of the gospel is essential to salvation. For when we denominate any property or principle to be essential to any substance or system we mean that the substance or system cannot exist without it: and when we say that any doctrine is an essential of revealed religion we mean that the Gospel cannot exist without it. Whoever therefore denies any principle thus essential in fact rejects the Gospel and therefore cannot be saved by it. If man then can differ concerning every doctrine of revelation and yet be Christians then there is nothing essential in the Gospel. And if there be nothing essential in this then man may reject the whole of it without endangering their salvation. A sentiment likely leading to such a result cannot receive the assent of any reasonable person. And therefore we may conclude that there are some principles in the religion of the bible that are essential: and if essential then all Christians must agree in them in the main although their views may not coincide in every particular.

<Asterisk>

I shall not at this time attempt the difficult task of drawing definitely the line between doctrines that are essential and those not so: I would only refer to some of those obviously fundamental.

Of this description we are warranted in saying are the existence and character of Jehovah. *For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* If we mistake the character of the God we worship we shall of course be led to offer him those services that are not acceptable. We shall love and serve a being of our own imagination and not the God of the Scriptures. The Hindoo fancies that he knows and loves the true God although he conceives of him under the form of no less than 300 millions of divinities. And when the spiritual and perfectly holy character of the one only living and true God of the bible is exhibited before him - however attached to the God of his imagination - the picture is absolutely repulsive and disgusting. And not less offensive is the scriptural character of God to many in Christian lands who have framed in their imagination a God of their own liking. A man for instance may have invested the Deity with the single moral attribute of mercy and because it would be impossible for such a God to punish him for sin he has towards him a sort of affection. But open before him the nature and character of the Jehovah of the Scriptures - having the attributes of truth and justice to support as well as that of mercy - a being who will by no means clear the guilty - tell him of the purer eyes than can behold iniquity and of that holiness which stands infinitely aloof from the approach of sin and pollution - tell him of that mysterious union of the Father, Son, and Spirit whereby they exist coequal and eternal - yet of the same individual substance - tell him of the peculiar relation sustained by each of the persons of the Godhead towards a revolted world - and from such a picture as this the man turns away as a false distorted and disgusting view of the Divinity. But to those who have been taught of God and born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God such views of the character of Jehovah invest it with a peculiar glory and loveliness.

Christians also have in every age been agreed in that doctrine which teaches a renovation of heart to be necessary in order to their admission into heaven. From the scriptural representations of the universal alienation of the human heart from God so that it is deceitful above all things and and desperately wicked - they would infer the necessity of this moral renovation even if Christ had not said *except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Many indeed have had confused notions on this subject who nevertheless have given evidence of having been themselves the subject of this renewing of the Holy Ghost and who therefore embraced the essence of the doctrine.

Alike coincident have been the views of Christians in the belief that they are justified *freely by grace through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus.* That Christ died as a substitute for sinners and thus redeemed all who believe in him from the curse of the broken law is indeed the grand and immovable point on which Christians in every age and every description have rested for salvation. They are all made to see that by the works of the law no flesh living can be justified - since all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. They perceive that when the law is once broken the sinner is unable to make to it any sort of satisfaction and that God cannot forgive the offender without some kind of satisfaction. The atonement of Christ therefore becomes indispensable in the religion of the sinner. And when the Christian finds that there is none that doeth good no not one he sees also that he is wholly dependant upon grace through the redemption of Christ for justification. His own works cannot justify him because they are all mixed with him and subsequent good works can never atone for past violations of the divine law - and his conduct before conversion as he now perceives was one unalleviated course of rebellion. And surely it must have been the works of grace or undeserved favours that laid and executed this wonderful and glorious plan of reconciling a revolted world through the death of Jesus Christ. In fine

Christians have ever responded amen to the sentiment of the apostle - by grace *are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God*. From this grand central point of the gospel real christians have indeed differences in their explanations of its various connections and bearings and hence they have secured to the eye of superficial observation to be at variance upon the essence of the doctrine itself: but in all that is essential in it they have not disagreed.

I might enumerate other scripture truths such as repentance and the necessity of a holy life in which all real Christians have coincided: but time will not permit and it is unnecessary. For if a man once admit the truth that such is his desperate wickedness that he can never be saved except solely by grace through the redemption there is in Christ he will not long deny anything else essential in the Christian system. He will then believe repentance and holiness to be necessary. And that he stands in continual need of the influences of the Spirit to renew and sanctify his soul.

Secondly Christians are essentially one in their experience. I mean in the grand leading features of their experience. Ten thousand minor diversities exist among believers in their affections and feelings: but these rather respect the vividness than the nature of their feelings. For although two Christian neighbors may differ widely in describing the intensity of the religious affections yet two christians from the antipodes will immediately know each other to be brethren from the nature of their emotions.

They will agree in regard to the incipient stages of their experience and except here those very few instances - and judging from the world of God and experience they are very few - in which persons are sanctified from the womb. In all other cases men before they savingly believe in the in the Lord Jesus Christ are brought to see their need of a Saviour. That is they are made to realize their personal sinfulness - the wickedness of their hearts and their lives - and to have such a sense of their depravity as leads them to feel that they are most assuredly lost unless some other arm be stretched out for their assistance - unless some other atonement be made than they can make. This sense of the entire wickedness of their unrenewed heart leads them to feel the need of a change of heart - produces a feeling of distress on account of their having offended a holy God and being continually exposed to his righteous and eternal displeasure. And they are hence led to cry to God with fervency for mercy and the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost. All Christians are not sensible at any sudden transition from anxiety to hope: but in almost every instance that anxiety decreases in all cases a new course of conduct follows.

And in the process of sanctification all believers agree in their general experience. They all feel themselves to be exceeding sinful. Irreligious men and sceptics may doubt their entire moral pollution but Christians have evidence of it from day to day in their own hearts and all the reasonings in the world will not make them believe otherwise. Self deceived professors talk of their having arisen at perfection: but true believers are certain not so much by a process of reasoning as by their own experience that perfection is never attainable in this life much as the bible describes. This sinful disposition within them is the constant burthen of all believers. They feel it to be more and more intolerable every succeeding year and pant more and more for deliverance. They are sensible of an internal conflict in the old man warring with the new - a law in their members warring against a law of their mind and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members.

Christians are one in their desires. They desire submission to the will of God - a deliverance from a proud and unsubdued heart - a disposition to devote themselves entirely to God - and the promotion of the cause of Christ in all around them even to the ends of the world.

They are one too in their fears. They fear violating the holy law of God - doing despite the Spirit of grace and crucifying the Redeemer afresh. They fear they are not growing in grace - nay that they have never been born again - and that they shall be finally cast away.

They are one also in their hopes. They hope they shall finally reach heaven. In some indeed this hope is so feeble that themselves do not discern it yet it is sufficient to preserve them from despair.

They are one likewise in the habit of prayer. They feel this to be a privilege and a duty - and dare not and do not neglect it. A Christian without prayer is certainly a character unknown in the scriptures.

Finally they are one in efforts to obey God. They have a new principle within them that impels them to obedience and the want of obedience where it can be rendered is an evidence of a want of religion.

Such in brief is the oneness of Christians. The scriptures and history warrant us in the conclusion that as a general fact such as our destitute of any of those things which constitute this oneness whatever their professions are also destitute of the humble and pure spirit of the children of God. They may exhibit a strict morality and perform the external services of religion and fancy themselves to be ripe for heaven. Still neither their hearts nor lives exhibit the fruits of those really born of God.

In view of the subject that has been thus but briefly (imperfectly) discussed, I remark in the first place that the great principles of the religion of the gospel are as fixed and uniform and constant in their operations as the laws of nature. In the natural world certain causes invariably produce certain effects and other causes cannot produce the same. So in Christianity the hearty reception of its fundamental doctrines invariably produces a religious holy character and no other principles will produce the same. Where these essential truths are not received there is no evidence that a religious character is ever formed. The rising of the sun and the natural day are not more certainly connected than the essential truths of the gospel with a religious character. Nor is the absence of the sun more certainly followed by darkness than the rejection of these truths is by the want of the power of religion.

Secondly the subject teaches us the folly of those who neglect to embrace religion on account of the numerous divisions and contentions among Christians. I feel warranted in saying that from the testimony of scripture and of ecclesiastical history all the real children of God agree in the essentials both of doctrine and practice in the gospel. Let any man collect together the opinions and examine the lives of all those persons of whatever name who have given by their devoted obedience faithfulness and humility most satisfactory evidence that they were the children of God and he will find that in the great and broad principles and practices of the gospel they essentially coincide. Yet very many are disposed to say that there is so much of difference in contention among professed Christians that they cannot determine what is true and what false and therefore they live and die halting between the two opinions. But if they could faithfully and with prayer read the bible they would find it in its essential principles the plainest book they ever read and if they consult the history of eminent servants of God it will be found their views and feelings coincide with the Scriptures. Because Christians differ about many things isn't it may be of importance but not essential to salvation is not therefore any reason for a man to give up the whole gospel and conclude the whole of religion to be unsettled and changeable. It is merely a reason for adhering more closely to the scriptures and seeing that we *build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*

Thirdly the subject teaches us what we ought to require in a professing Christian in order to admit him to our fellowship. It is not whether he agrees with us in all the shibboleths of our

denomination - but whether his head contain the essentials and his heart have felt the power and his life exhibit the fruits of the gospel. In other words whether he be a new creature in Christ Jesus. If satisfied of this we need not fear whatever name he be called but we are receiving to our bosoms one whom Christ has received. But if we find no evidence of this it is not a breach of charity but a solemn duty to Christ whatever be a man's profession to withhold the right hand of fellowship.

Finally all this be true we learn that all real Christians will be in perfect concord in another world. They already agree in the essentials of the gospel in those various circumstances that now prevent their perceiving all subjects alike - such as passion and prejudice - different education and in imperfect justification will turn will then be done away and they will then see eye to eye and all belong to the same blessed communion. From the east and the west the north and the south out of every nation and tribe will then be gathered together to Mount Zion with a heart prepared to ascribe their salvation to the sovereign mercy of God the Father through *the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost shed down on them abundantly through Jesus Christ their Saviour who thought it not robbery to be equal with God*. There all will be prepared to honour the Lord even as they honour the Father and to offer the exalted worship to both: saying *blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him - that sitteth upon the throne and unite the Lamb forever and ever*. There all will be prepared to shout *hallelujah true and righteous are his judgments* - as the smoke of the torments of the wicked ascend up forever and ever. There are all can join in saying – *Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and hath made us kings and priests into God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever Amen*.

Delivered

At Conway August 29 1824

At Ashfield April 1825

At Amherst College August 1829

At Amherst College July 5 1835

At Amherst College July 1859

At Northampton November 1832

At Amherst Baptist Church 1840

At Deerfield May 1842

At Amherst College July 1844

At Amherst College July 1848

At Amherst West Parish December 1860

## Sermon 226 Exposition of the Fourth Chapter of Romans

[Sermon No. 226, Exposition of Romans Ch. 4, 1825 Jan,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 9 ]

The apostle still building on the broad foundation he had laid in the beginning of the epistle endeavours incontrovertibly to establish the doctrine of justification by faith alone. He had already proved this in general terms from the great fact that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But there were peculiar difficulties to prevent the Jews from a cordial reception of this humbling truth. The self-righteousness of the Gentile struggles against it: but that of the Jew is more deeply rooted. He has not only the pride of nature to brace him against the truth but also the pride of peculiar and unexampled privileges and favours shown to his nation - the pride of having scrupulously performed certain rites and ceremonies with the impression that this would secure him the favour of God. To tear away this false foundation of confidence is the grand object of the apostle in the chapter on which we are now entering. He selects two eminent examples - Abraham and David from Jewish history and attempts to prove that these saints especially the first were not justified by works but by faith: and if he could convince the Jew of this it would seem his objections must be at an end: for if one so distinguish for holiness and good works could not thereby attain to the favour of God what hope could there be for others less eminent!

### Verse 1.

*What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?*

What did Abraham find to be effectual in regard to the works he performed in the flesh that is in human nature? Did this justify him or not?

### Verse 2.

*For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.*

He may glory because he has kept the whole law which no other man ever did - but from the Old Testament it is certain that although Abraham was eminent for piety, yet before God he had nothing to boast.

### Verse 3.

*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

For, etc.

Verses 4 - 5.

*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

If salvation be obtained by working it cannot be the result of grace and such a person might demand it as one who had fulfilled all the law. But to the man who fails in thus keeping the whole law his faith must constitute the condition of justification and be imputed or counted to him for perfect righteousness.

Christian patriarch also describes this same mode of justification - verses 6, 7 and 8.

Verses 6 – 8.

*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

You Jews would fain believe that justification can come only upon those who practice circumcision excluding all others from salvation: But is this true?

Verses 9 - 10.

*Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

It is the object of the apostle in these verses to prove that Abraham was justified before he was circumcised: and this will be evident by looking back to the history of those transactions as recorded in Genesis. The act of faith which Moses says was imputed unto Abraham for righteousness was his believing in God's promise that his seed should be numerous as the stars. This promise was made while Abraham was childless: otherwise it would have demanded no extraordinary exercise of faith to have believed in this promise. But the rite of circumcision was instituted not until Ishmael was 13 years old -



or 14 years after Abraham was justified. So that this rite evidently had nothing to do with that justification. What then was the object of circumcision? The apostle answers this question in the next two verses.

Verses 11 - 12.

*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*

It seems versus that circumcision was a seal or proof or evidence of that covenant God entered into with Abraham and his posterity that he *would be their God and they should be his people*. He is also here declared to be *the father of all them that believe* whether circumcised or not. That is he stood at the head of them all and entered into a covenant with God for them. It follows therefore that the covenant Abraham made with God embraces all believers both under the Jewish and Christian dispensations to the end of the world. The covenant then under which we live and on the terms of which alone we expect eternal happiness is the same as that made with Abraham. It has been indeed several times renewed since his days with different individuals as with David: but still the original terms of the covenant or agreement remain essentially the same. But the covenant made with Abraham included not only Abraham himself but all his household and all the children of Jewish parents from the earliest period of their existence. At the age of eight days they received that mark which Paul calls the seal of the righteousness of faith. And if without violating the covenant God could substitute the Lord's prayer for the Passover another of the seals of this covenant - as we know was done by Christ on the evening preceding his crucifixion why could he not as well substitute the baptism of infants for circumcision? And when Christ commanded his disciples to go into all the world teach all nations *baptizing them in the name etc.*, why did he not actually substitute baptism for circumcision just as much as he did the Lord's supper for the passover when he said this do in remembrance of me? And if nothing was said by him about excluding infants from baptism how shall we dare to exclude them when we must believe that we still live under the Abraham covenant which permitted the introduction of infants into the visible church? How shall we avoid such inferences except by denying the Christian covenant to be the same as that made with Abraham and if we deny this how shall we quiet our consciences for thus rejecting the plain meaning of the apostle?

Paul proceeds to prove that Abraham stood at the head of all believers in entering into covenant with God.

Verse 13.

*For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

What does he mean by saying the Abraham should be the heir of the world? Evidently that he should inherit all the nations of the earth as his children - in the same sense as David declares children to be an heritage.

He proceeds –

Verse 14.

*For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*

Why void? Because the promise was made exclusively to the faith of Abraham and if on the ground of law merely men were to be justified both the faith and the promise are of no avail - indeed on such ground none could be saved and thus the promise would be made void.

Verse 15.

*Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is,  
there is no transgression.*

Does he mean that any of the human race are without law?

If then the law only works wrath and makes the promise of none effect we must look to faith.

Verses 16 - 17.

*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*

The promise must be of faith or it could not have been sure if left to depend for its accomplishment on man alone. But now it is made sure to all the spiritual seed of Abraham who is the father of believers in the view of that God who entered into covenant with him as such and in whom he believed as him who quickened the dead and called into existence new objects and things with the same ease as he animates those that already exist. It was this quality of the Deity on which especially the faith of Abraham by which he was accounted righteous rested. To give a fuller account of that particular instance of its exercise to which Paul had all along referenced he says

Verses 18 and 19, 20, 21, and 22.

*Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

But the declaration of Abraham's acceptance through his this faith was not a mere unimportant insulated fact of no use to any but himself.

Verses 23, 24 and 25.

*Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

In what sense is it that believers are justified by the resurrection of Christ? This was the last act of that series of transactions by which Christ procured us justification and therefore it is here put for the whole. This verse contains an epitome of the Gospel. It points us back to that unknown period in eternity when Christ by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God was delivered up to the works of redemption. It leads our thoughts also to the various trying scenes of his pilgrimage on earth and to the inexpressible agony that fell upon him in Gethsemane and on Calvary. We see the curse of the law falling on his guiltless head - we see that the Father delivering him up for our offences and making his soul an offering for sin as he bows his head and gives up the ghost. But the passage directs our thoughts also to the time when the bars of death will burst asunder and the Saviour came forth triumphing over principalities and powers making a shew of them openly. We see him ascending on high *leading captivity captive* having finished the works given him to do - having magnified and made honourable the law and rendered it just for God to justify the believer in Jesus. How often in his epistles does Paul recur to these great truths - to Jesus Christ and him crucified and what Christian is there that does not love to revolve the interesting story and in it to adore the wonders of redeeming love.

In looking back upon the chapter now examined a few remarks are suggested.

1. We learn from it that the method of justification is the same in every age and in every country. It is by faith alone and not by works. Faith is the condition and the righteousness of Christ the procuring cause. Even to those who lived many thousand years before the advent of Christ and who had but feeble apprehensions of his character and offices is forgiven and salvation granted only through him. Nay if there be any in lands that have never yet been cheered by the light of revelation who will finally be saved it will be entirely through the merits of the Saviour of whom they have never heard. And their faith is the hand that reaches forth to secure salvation. In whatever heart there exists just one particle

about simple reliance - that childlike confidence in God for which Abraham was distinguished God will impute that faith to such an one for righteousness: that is he will accept of it in that place of a perfect righteousness - and for the sake of Jesus Christ will bestow on its possessor eternal life. It will not be enquired whether a person lived under the Jewish or Christian dispensation whether before after the coming of Christ - whether among the barbarous or the refined the bond or the free whether he has trodden in the steps Abraham whether a faith like that of this patriarch has been felt and cherished.

2. If such be the method of justification we see how cordially all who are finally saved can unite in celebrating the grace of God and their salvation. Justification by faith presupposes that men are cut off from salvation by works of law and therefore if any method be devised for their rescue it must be founded in unmerited favour. He therefore whose faith was feeble and not exercised till near the close of life and he in whom strong faith and devoted obedience shed on each other a mutual luster and gathered strength and beauty for more than half a century when they meet at length on Mount Zion above will cheerfully celebrate the same grace by which alone they were saved. To the one it might have been shown in richer abundance and this would add a new note of praise to his song: but to all it formed the groundwork of their salvation and ought therefore and will form the endless theme of their hallelujahs.

Finally in view of this chapter let us enquire whether the faith of Abraham be ours. We shall not probably be called to so severe an exercise of this virtue as was the patriarch. But we need such a confidence in God as would not permit us to shrink though Abraham's trials be ours. At least we need so much of his faith as will enable us to trust the power and faithfulness of God amid the ordinary trials of life - so much of faith as will banish those murmurs that secretly rise within us when deprived of the possession of some fond object of pursuit - so much of faith as will cause us to follow the strait forward path of duty leaving consequences with Him who governs all things and not endeavour to shape our course through the thousand devious windings expediency open before us. We need so much faith as to induce us to yield up all that we possess when the cause of religion demands it. And to follow the Saviour through evil report and good report counting it all joy when we fall into divers temptations or trials. We need faith enough to overcome the allurements of the world and its frowns - faith enough to spread over the glories of religion a brighter and more attractive splendor than the world can offer to us. We who are parents need faith enough to educate our children for another world instead of this - to consult first their spiritual welfare and not their temporal when we seek for them a situation in the world - faith enough to prevent their criminal conformity to the world and to refrain from it ourselves through fear of reproach and scorn. And finally we need faith enough to give us calmness and resignation when we meet the king of terrors and amid the darkness and unknown agony with which he comes attended to rest our souls upon the arm of Him who is mighty to save and who will walk with the believer through the dark valley and sustain him unhurt and conduct him to glory. Without such a faith as this how can we lay claim to Abraham as our father - how can we hope for his rewards? God in infinite mercy my brethren grant *that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Amen*

Delivered

At Conway January 1825

## Sermon 228 Exposition of Part of Romans 3 and of Romans 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter

[Sermon No. 228, Exposition of a part of Romans Ch. 3 and Romans Ch. 4, 1824 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 9]

Romans 3:27

*Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law?  
of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

*[In this sermon Hitchcock discusses justification by faith versus justification by works; in the end he warns that views contrary to Paul's will endanger one's soul.]*

I trust that none of my hearers who have previously attended to my efforts to unfold the meaning of the first chapters of Romans can have forgotten the important subjects that occupied our attention in the third chapter.

State the drift of the apostle. He next proceeds to aim a blow at human pride. Of what has man to boast?

Verse 28.

*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

Because God has resolved that no flesh shall glory in his presence and if he could be justified by the law works he would glory therefore Paul can conclude that *a man etc.* Without works of law - whether ceremonial or moral works.

In the second chapter of James' Epistle we find this sentiment - *Ye see then how that by works man is justified and not by faith only.* It must be confessed that when we look at these verses from Paul and James detached from their connection there is an apparent opposition of meaning between the apostles. But apparent disagreements between the sacred writers sometimes disappear when we carefully examine the context. In this case let us enquire what kind of faith it is which Paul describes as the condition of our justification. It is a faith that worketh by love and henceforth for the heart - a faith that inevitably produces good works - and cannot exist without them. And what kind of faith is that by which James says a man cannot be justified. It is a faith without works - a merely speculative faith - dead faith - the faith possessed by devils who believe and tremble but neither love nor serve God. Paul too would say that such a faith as this would by no means justify a man before God. Thus far the two apostles would agree that no man can be justified by faith that does not produce good works. But James says that *a man is justified by works and not by faith only.* And how does he prove it? He brings forward the same example to prove that man is justified by faith without works of law. Says James *was not*

*Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou not how faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith Abraham believed God and it was imprinted unto him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God.* But how does it prove that Abraham was justified by his works to quote from the Scriptures the declaration that he *believed God and it was imprinted unto him for righteousness*? Would not this rather prove that his faith justified him as Paul says? And is not this after all the real meaning of James? If not why should he quote this text so clear in proof of this meaning? Offering up Isaac was the deed which as James declares justified Abraham before God? Now he did not do this until several years after the time *when he believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness*. For Isaac was not then born. How then could that deed justify him when the bible declares that he was justified many years before it? That deed did justify the faith of Abraham and proved his faith to be genuine and not a mere speculative idle faith. His faith wrought with his works and by his works was faith made perfect as the apostle says – and thus justified it in the sight of God's angels and men. And the same kind of justification is necessary to prove the faith of any man to be of the James character. This seems very clearly to be the apostles meaning. So that if we affix any consistent meaning to the reasoning of James we shall make him agree with Paul in saying *we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*.

But the Jews if they admitted the truth of Paul's reasoning in regard to their own nation would exclude all other nations from participating in it. Paul therefore proceeds to lay the axe to the root of exclusive pharisaical spirit in the 29 and 30 verses.

*Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles?  
Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify  
the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.*

But to this doctrine of justification by faith is objected against – Read verse 31.

*Do we then make void the law through faith?  
God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

That is if men are justified by faith alone then what use is the law of God – of what use is obedience.

Answer - so far from making void the law or obligation to obey it this doctrine establishes it on a firmer foundation.

For in the first place it does not release the believer from his obligations to keep the law. The moral law I mean: for all grant that the sacrifice of Christ rendered unnecessary the ancient sacrifices of animals and other rites and ceremonies that pointed to his atonement for sin. But he declares that he came not to destroy the law or the prophets - that is the moral law. And *though heaven and earth pass one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled*. All the laws God ever gave to man are still in force except those which he has clearly repealed and he has repealed none except the Jewish

ceremonial law which was never intended for all men. The moral law is of eternal obligation. And what is there in justification by faith that releases a man from its obligation to do as good as God commands him? Does it leave him at liberty to disobey because he has had an unmerited favour conferred upon him? Because God has found out of a method by which he can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus although that believer be a sinner does this burst asunder the bond that tie the will of man in the service of God and lift from his head the restraints of authority and leave him to go forth with impunity and spread desolation and misery through the empire of Jehovah? Why is not the command of Jehovah as binding upon him after justification as before?

Nay more: I remark secondly as a proof that this doctrine establishes the law that the believers obligations to obey the law are thus greatly increased. He was born to perform God's will before justification by his being a creature of God's creative powers and a dependant on his preserving goodness. But after his justification there is superadded to these claims upon his service that great blessing without which that existence and preservation would have proved a bitter curse. I mean eternal salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ. And this was conferred too unasked and undeserved while there reigned in his heart a bitter hostility to God and he sinned as we all do till regenerated in every accountable act. When he was an enemy God reconciled him and pronounced him righteous through the righteousness of his only Son and on his account threatened him as an heir to an everlasting inheritance. He put within him a new heart and took away his enmity and shed abroad his love in his heart by the Holy Ghost. It is obvious then that by his justification an increased ability to obey the divine law is given to a man: nay until faith is thus imputed to him he is morally unable to obey it. Faith then establishes the law because without it the law would only be the death warrant of the whole race of Adam and that none of its requirements would be executed: whereas through faith man's ability to obey it being increased his obligation to regard it are also increased.

There is too the debt of gratitude contracted by the pardoned and justified sinner which will partially impel him to obedience. Has God thus lavished on him the riches of his grace - has he taken the heart of stone out of his flesh and given him a heart of flesh has he snatched him a poor miserable wretch standing on the brink of everlasting despair has he snatched him from his peril and given him a rock to set upon and a passport to eternal glory - has he sworn by himself that he will never leave his soul but guide and guard it through all the perils and trials of his course and bring at last a compassion over every enemy to the gates of Paradise - and now is return for all this shall this man exulting in the proud confidence of security resolve by rushing into sin he will crucify his Redeemer afresh and trample underfoot his precious blood? No it is not in the heart of the Christian to do it. Shall he not rather feel the powerful constraining influence of gratitude impelling him in compliance with the divine requisition to deny righteousness and every worldly lust - and to live soberly righteously and godly in the world? Yes if a christian he will feel that he is not his own but is bought with a price and that it is his reasonable service to consecrate himself a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God.

Thirdly faith establishes the law or renders its injunctions more powerful and operative because a man can have no evidence that he is justified unless he habitually obey its requirements. It is not merely the doctrine of James but of the whole bible that faith without works is dead and that a man is justified by works and not by faith only. It will only swell the terrors of our current condemnation to say Lord Lord while we do not the will of God. It is only when we do whatsoever Christ commands us that we shall know that we are his disciples. It is no matter what long and deep felt and seemingly genuine experiences we have had. It is no matter what delightful and triumphant transitions we have had from grief to joy from despair to hope - the moment we cease to do the will of God all these feelings and changes do not amount to a feather's weight in proof of our Christian character. It would be as easy to

show that the very Spirits of darkness are the sons of life as to prove that man a justified believer who leads an unholy life. Every man who reads his bible knows all this; and if he suppose himself thus justified he cannot but feel the imperious necessity of obeying the divine law or of abandoning his hope of heaven. This though a selfish motive to obedience is so powerful that it tends strongly to establish the law.

The evidence is then most conclusive that the doctrine of justification so far from making void the law or weakening its obligations or its force lends a tenfold energy to its injunctions and establishes its hold on the human heart with a much stronger grasp. We are now prepared to follow the apostle in a continuation of his argument in the fourth chapter: but as so much time has already been exhausted it must be deferred. But the passage now examined leads to one or two important suggestions before I close.

And first from the last verse of this chapter we derive a mark by which we can determine in what consists the true doctrine of justification by faith taught by the apostles. It is obvious that the same objection cannot lie against more than one system of religious doctrines: for different systems will involve different objections. Now Paul has stated an objection that was made or might be made in his day to the doctrine of justification by faith which he taught and if we can ascertain against what view of justification the same objection has at this day we may be certain that is the doctrine of Paul on the subject. The objection to his view of justification was that *he made void the law through faith*: that is if men were justified in the way he taught by faith without works the law was of no use - those justified were free from its injunctions. Faith was the sole condition of acceptance and obedience was of no use and it was no matter what sort of a life of man lived if he only had faith since faith alone could justify them.

On the subject of justification in modern times there has been considerable diversity of opinion; and different views of that have been proposed. Let us see whether this objection as stated by Paul lies against any of them. If it does not we may conclude some of them accord with the views Paul gave of this doctrine.

The ground in which some rest their hopes of justification is that they have done all that God requires of them. None who had just apprehensions of the divine law could indulge such an idea as this: but some have fancied because they have not been guilty of the grosser acts of wickedness that they had done all God requires of them. And if so instead of making void the law they have entirely fulfilled its requirement and therefore this is not the doctrine of Paul.

Others maintain that their own obedience in connection with their repentance for the sins of which they are guilty furnishes ground of their justification before God. It is equally evident that in this scheme the law is not made void through faith since it contains no reference to faith.

A much more numerous class of men believe that a God of boundless mercy will expect of such feeble creatures as men an imperfect or partial obedience and justify them on the ground that they have sincerely endeavoured to do as well as they could with their frail natures. Is it not also most evident that this system does not make void the law through faith. It does indeed make void the law doing away at once its obligation and its penalties but this is not done through faith since faith has no place in the system.

Another view of justification maintained by numbers is that men are justified in part by their own



righteousness and in part by the righteousness of Christ. Our own obedience is acknowledged by such persons to be deficient and to supply this deficiency Christ has made an atonement, and faith in him will justify us so far as we cannot be justified by our own works. But the objection made to Paul's doctrine cannot lie against this scheme: because obedience to the law is made by it to constitute the first and most important ground of justification while the atonement of Christ comes in only to make up for deficiencies. This therefore is not Paul's view of justification.

Another scheme of justification defended in modern times is that good works are an indispensable condition of our justification by the merits of Christ. That the faith which justifies the believer infallibly produces good works if a man live long enough after justification to exhibit them is a part of Paul's system: but he teaches that these good works have no effect whatever and are no way concerned in the simple act of justification as is evident not only from his plain declarations but also from the fact that the objection he states against his doctrine will not apply to that scheme which teaches that good works are an indispensable condition of justification. For if they are so every one must see that a powerful motive - selfish indeed but of great weight - is presented for yielding obedience to the divine law. This scheme therefore cannot be the same with the one Paul inculcates.

There remains but one more view of this doctrine viz. that which declares the righteousness of Christ to be the sole ground and faith the sole condition of justification. By this scheme works are excluded altogether from any share in restoring us to the divine favour. And how often do we hear men objecting to this scheme that if our works have no influence in obtaining our justification then it is no matter and will not alter the case however vile is our conduct - and the law of God is no longer of any use. Nay very many in the Christian world often called Antinomians are so well convinced that this objection is well founded that they believe and declare themselves to be released from their obligations to obey the law. This objection then against the view of this subject is a very natural one: for it has probably at some time or other risen in the heart of every man and it answers precisely to that which was advanced against Paul's doctrine of justification. Paul's views thus coincide with this system and with this only because the objection will be against no other.

To conclude I seriously enquire what will be the final condition of those who adopt any of the false schemes of justification I have pointed out and stumble at the doctrine as defined and illustrated by Paul. He declares that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law - or more correctly translated - man is justified by faith without works of law - that is all men who ever are justified attain the blessings in this manner. If any then seek for it in any other way how is it possible they should obtain it; and if not justified we know they cannot be glorified. Let us beware then my hearers on what foundation we build in this respect. Let us seriously and with prayer study the scriptures upon this all important subject knowing that a mistake here is unspeakably alarming and dreadful.

Delivered

At Conway December 1824

## Sermon 229 The Only True Happiness

[Sermon No. 229, "The Only True Happiness," Psalms 4:6, 1824 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 10]

Psalms 4:6

*There be many that say, who will show us any good?*

I will not we think be adding to the words of scripture to say that this question is put not merely by many but by every son and daughter of Adam: and put too ten thousand times during their lives. For however various the paths in which men pass through life the grand object of all their diligence and exertions is happiness. And although disappointment in one degree or another has been the complaint of every worshiper of this phantom goddess still the rising crowd press on with just as much confidence that they shall not fail as if the experience of all that are gone before them were the reverse. From the cradle to the grave every man carries engraved on his forehead the enquiry, *who will show me any good?* How shall I improve my present condition and when find those sources of happiness that have hitherto eluded my researches. And although the text represents merely that many ask that question yet by that word the inspired writers mean all which is a mode of expression not infrequent in the orders of God. Thus in Romans Paul says, *for as by one man's disobedience many (that is all) were made sinners so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*. Hence then it is not adding to the words of scripture to say that the enquiry in the text is put by all man through every period of their probation.

To that question the voice of experience has uniformly returned the unwelcome answer - there is no perfect happiness to be found on earth. But the enquirer proceeds to ask is there any happiness on earth and if so where is it to be found? The voice of wisdom and experience reply that there is a degree of happiness attainable in every circumstance and condition of life and that the highest degree of earthly happiness is found in religion and in religion only. *Hear the conclusion of the whole matter, says the wisest of men, fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man*. Whatever of worldly enjoyment may be found in the mere objects of time and sense it is not worthy to be compared for a moment with the satisfaction resulting from a life conformed to the will of God. And in proceeding to answer this enquiry in the text I need not stop to show in a Christian audience that happiness is to be found nowhere but in religion. I proceed therefore directly to state and prove directly to state and prove that there are but two conditions among men that may be pronounced happy.

First the state of the man who enjoys the light of God's countenance.

Secondly the state of the man who mourns and longs and prays for that light.

I state in the first place that we may pronounce that man happy who enjoys the light of God's countenance. But here let me be understood. I mean only the man who does really enjoy the true light of God's countenance and not the man who mistakes the flashes of his own feelings for a beam from the throne of God. Many a man has fancied himself walking in the very noon day of heavenly light and love while in fact he saw nothing but the lurid glare of a flame kindled by his own earthly passions. The scriptures however show us how we are to distinguish between the light that comes from heaven and

the sparks of our own kindling. And the man who finds evidence from the day to day and year to year to hear that the light of God's countenance is lifted upon him must be as happy as it is possible for anyone to be in a world of sin.

For in the first place such a man has a well grounded assurance that he is no longer exposed to the wrath of God.

He remembers that by nature he was *a child of wrath even as others* and that for months and years he was an enemy of God under the curse of a broken law whose unyielding penalty was eternal death. For him were prepared the worm that never dies and the fire that never can be quenched and carelessly did he walk on the very brink of the lake that burns with fire and brimstone exposed every day and hour to be plunged into it by the strong arm of death. But the mercy of God guided and guarded his steps so that he fell not and at length grace snatched him from his perilous condition and fixed his feet upon the rock of ages and through the righteousness of his Saviour he is now permitted to believe that there is no condemnation for him. The oath and covenant of Jehovah secures him from final destruction.

And not only this but such a man is permitted to believe that this same oath and covenant secure to him a title to the eternal favour of God and the happiness of heaven. Not because he deserves that title: but because his Redeemer has died for him and ever lives to make intercession. Having fixed his faith on him he is permitted to have strong consolation - to see not only the gates of hell close beneath him so that he treads over it securely but the portals of heaven expanding to receive him disclosing joys and glories no tongue can speak - no stranger know. In the habitual hope of this blessed world the man who walks with God continues to live. Not indeed that he has never any intruding and overbalancing fears: but hope predominates and though clouds sometimes come over the clear day they soon pass over and leave the rays of the Son of Righteousness free passage into the believers soul. Must not such a man be happy? Happy even though poverty and pain and sickness oppress him!

In the third place such a man enjoys the pleasures of a good conscience.

*Our rejoicing is this, says the apostle, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world.* The inevitable effects of religious affections and in the heart and of a bright and well founded hope of heaven is to produce a holy life. *He that hath this hope in him, says John, purifieth himself as Christ is pure.* It leads a man to aim at universal obedience to the will of God and to subordinate every selfish interest to the interests of his kingdom and to the mortification and subjection of those lusts and passions that war against the soul. These do indeed sometimes get them mastery in the holiest of men but they triumph only for a moment while the subjection is habitual. Now it is well known that a guilty conscience and unregulated tumultuous and free passions are the two grand sources of human misery. But the Christian is in a great measure relieved from these miseries. He has habitually a conscience that does not deeply disturb him and his passions are usually regulated and subjected. The grace of God subdues them and through faith in Christ and penitence the burdened conscience is relieved and the man passes on in a calm and peaceful course diligent in duty and watchful against temptation. Such a state of mind was the grand object which the philosophers of heathen antiquity and of modern paganism have in vain attempted by austerities and severe rules of living to acquire. It is found nowhere but in the bosom of the devoted Christian. Even in his penitence there is a satisfaction not to be found in anything of a mere earthly kind and the last tear the Christian sheds over his sins is a tear of joy - rising from a sense of victory over his corruptions.

A fourth source of happiness this devoted Christian feels arises from communion with God and his Son Jesus Christ. Those of us whose communion with God is only occasional and who never get near the throne of grace can have but a faint impression of what the man enjoys who walks closely with God - who lives in a praying frame of mind and has if I may so speak God and his Redeemer for his constant companions. His earthly friends and companions may prove treacherous and fickle but his heavenly friends remain the same yesterday today and forever and he has no fears that they will ever forsake him unless he forsakes them. Dark as may be his earthly prospects - perplexing as his path may seem there is one place to which he can resort with unshaken confidence and from thence derive support and consolation and joy. What are all earthly pleasures compared with that holy joy and serenity that flows in upon the believer's soul when on his knees before God in his closet. How mean and contemptible appear all the objects for which the men of the world are toiling and striving and contending! How insignificant are crowns and empires compared with the possession of the friendship and communion of God! The believer's soul pants after this with ardent longings and would not exchange one smile of the Godhead for the joys and splendours of the whole world. Often with ardent feeling in the raptures of communion with God is the holy soul led to exclaim

*In such a frame as this  
My willing soul would rest  
And sit and sing herself away  
To everlasting bliss. [Source: Hymn by Isaac Watts, 1707]*

A fifth and an inexhaustible source of happiness is found in meditations upon the character of Jehovah - the Father the Son and the Spirit. This is a theme on which angels delight to dwell and which furnishes matter for many an elevated song. Now they contemplate the works of God as affording a transcript of his character especially his natural attributes and they join their voices in the song, *great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty*. Now they see his justice displayed in the punishment of sin and they are *just and true judgments*. Now they look on the Lamb that was slain to redeem a guilty world and *ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands unite saying with a loud voice worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessings*. Some thing of this feeling inspires the devoted Christian when he meditates upon the character of his God and Redeemer as displayed in the works of creation and redemption. It is a theme which will amaze more and more the longer it is contemplated - a theme by the side of which all earthly subjects become insignificant a theme that is calculated to strengthen faith and invigorate hope - a theme that tends to wean the affections from earthly objects and to fix them entirely upon the proper object the adorable and glorious God.

The last source of happiness I shall mention that the devoted believer finds is found in the government of God. On no subject perhaps are men so much in danger of becoming perplexed and distressed as with the present confused and disordered state of the world we inhabit unless they can see and feel the hand of God controlling the whole. The devoted Christian does see this. He discerns amid all the apparent confusion around him marks of the finger of a perfect God - evidence of his oversight all for the good of the universe and for his own glory. He sees that God is bringing order out of confusion - light out of darkness peace out of tumult and good out of evil. Above all he rejoices that he is himself in the hands of such a God and that he will be disposed of in such a manner as infinite wisdom sees best. Supported by the firm belief that his heavenly Father governs every event in perfect wisdom and justice and mercy he can gather comfort out of the darkest and most trying scenes of life: and though every earthly hope be swept away still with the same unyielding confidence he can *rejoice in God and joy in the God of his salvation* and with the angels in heaven shout hallelujah because the Lord God Omnipotent ruleth.

Surely the man who can thus extract sweets out of the bitterest ingredients in life must be a happy man.

I have only glanced at some of the sources of the happiness of the devoted Christian who enjoys the light of God's countenance. I hasten to the second head of the subject in which I am to show that the man who mourns and prays and longs for the light of God's countenance is also a happy man. Some such are no doubt to be found in society – who go all their lives mourning over their sins and never receive any comfort because they fancy themselves given up to perdition. Let it be definitely understood what sort of persons I intend. While I would send a ray of comfort into the really penitent heart I would by no means bolster up the hypocritical pharisee or the mere selfish seeker of the joys of heaven who has no relish for holiness. I do not mean that the man is happy who only has occasional desires to become religious and enter heaven while he pursues the world just as greedily and lives as much in its spirit as if they were neither heaven nor hell. Such men are very common. Indeed where is the person to be found who does not sometimes really desire to be religious and happy in heaven - not because they love holiness or God but because they wish for the loaves and fishes. It is only when a man lives on month after month year after year mourning over the hiding of God's countenance and who daily and hourly prays and longs that he may enjoy the favour of God and that the cloud may be withdrawn it is only such persons and there are not many such that I presume to denominate happy. And why are they happy? For if you ask them they will tell you with tears in their eyes that they are miserable because they fear they must be miserable forever - and that they have no reason to hope that they shall ever be fitted for heaven.

But in religion we must not estimate the happiness of man's condition by the sensible pleasures he enjoys but by considering the true state of his case. There may be a dark cloud over his mind and he may not know his true character nor destiny: and this I apprehend to be the character of those I include under this branch of the subject.

And they are happy in the first place because they are sensible that they are vile sinners. The mere knowledge of this fact is not indeed a source of present happiness. But this knowledge has a most powerful tendency to lead a man to put his trust in the Saviour whereby his eternal happiness will be secured. When therefore I look upon two men the one of whom is bowed down and agonized with a sense of his own wickedness so that he forgets to eat and to sleep while the other man has no trouble with his heart and is at ease in his possessions and can eat and sleep and laugh as freely as if his happiness were complete I cannot but look upon the former of these men as vastly the most happy: the probability is great that his eternal happiness will soon be secure: while the probability is almost equally great that the other man's everlasting misery will soon be begun. If I see the condemned criminal walking with a sorrowful heart towards a place of execution and know that a reprieve is in the officer's hands while over the head of one of the careless spectators who apprehend no danger I see a glittering sword just ready to fall should I have any doubt which of these persons was in the most happy condition?

The man who mourns and prays for the light of God's countenance is happy in the second place because he enjoys the pleasures of a good conscience. It is nothing uncommon to see such a man restraining his inordinate passions and regulating his life by the strictest precepts of the Gospel: and although he mourns over former sins and fancies them still unforgiven, he cannot thereby be deprived of the satisfaction which always results from a general conformity of life to the precepts of Christ. And to suppose a man to be mourning after the light of God's countenance while at the same time he is indulging in sin without restraint is to suppose an impossibility.

Such a person as I am describing may in the third place be tasting the luxury of doing good. This also is no uncommon case: to see a man without hope and earnestly desirous of the favour of God whose hands are busy all the while in deeds of benevolence and whose whole soul seems to enter into the work. Now although such a man may not be sensible of much satisfaction in pursuing such a course yet it is certain that he does enjoy very much in it. Let him be prevented from executing his benevolent plans, and he would quickly feel a painful aggravation of his misery and discover how much happiness he received from his benevolence. But every man who does really thirst and hunger for the light of God's countenance will be engaged in doing good: and is not the condition of a man who is doing good a happy condition?

Fourthly the man who mourns for the light of God's countenance is happy because he has some positive enjoyment in religion. Or at least this is the case in many instances. There is to some minds a sort of pleasure in melancholy when it is not extreme. The mourner bereaved of friends finds a relief and kind of satisfaction in tears which the poet has denominated the joy of grief. And the friend who mourns over the hidings of God's countenance often experiences the joy of grief. When he reflects upon the value of the favour of God and that he has lost it he is led to put up a more earnest prayer than he otherwise would for mercy and light and his religious affections are thereby greatly increased and though of a melancholy character they still do afford great comfort. Deprive such persons of these feelings altogether and let them remain unaffected by religious things for a period and the increased horror of their minds would show them that they enjoy some satisfactions in mourning after the light of God's countenance.

Finally the situation of such persons is happy because they will finally attain the object they are seeking. If they really seek with godly sincerity as in this connection I suppose the cloud that now hangs over their souls will ere long be withdrawn and the meridian rays of the Son of Righteousness will shine upon thee forever: for it is the promise of Jehovah *he that seeketh shall find*. What then though they suffer for the short period of the present life the painful anxieties of a soul that fancies itself forsaken of God: yet if eternal joy awaits them and that too so soon we must pronounce them happy - their present *light affliction is not worthy to be compared with the joy that shall be revealed in them*.

Thus have I pointed out to you my hearers the only two conditions on earth in which a man can be pronounced happy - and in fact they amount to the same condition viz. the possession of religion. Till a man either enjoys or mourns after the light of God's countenance whatever worldly prospects and enjoyments are before him he cannot be regarded by sound wisdom he is not regarded by angels in any other than the most miserable condition - a condition which if he had any just sense of it that would make him shudder. Give me then the light of God's countenance and I envy not the rich, the powerful or the honorable. Nay to the highest earthly prosperity infinitely do I prefer the apparently sorrowful condition of the soul that mourns and prays and longs for the favour of God. Better far better is it to be weeping before the mercy seat of Christ than to be reveling and rejoicing in the seats of worldly glory and pleasure. Rather would I weave the cypress wreath around the cross than to circle the gay and flowery garland around the head of Bacchus or Venus or Pluto. Oh ye votaries of the world ye who are in chase after its riches honors or pleasures did you know but the sweetness of communion with God your fancied transitory joys would be abandoned and you would take up the cross of Christ - did you know how soothing and precious are the very tears of the Christian you would envy the mourning soul whom now you pity and who seems to you the most miserable of men. You are deluded by a feverish dream from which you will soon awake in agony - he is seeking a heavenly crown that he will soon obtain. The time is at hand when all your airy hopes and idle pleasures will be swallowed up in the blackness of darkness forever: while he will mount up on angels wings with the vigor of immortality where every tear

will be wiped away and eternal glory encircle his brow. Go on then and seize while you may the short-lived pleasures of the world remembering that the bubble will soon burst and hope and peace and joy will flee forever away.

Delivered

At Conway December 1824

## Sermon 230 Service of the World and God Inconsistent

[Sermon No. 230, "Service of the World and God Inconsistent," Matthew 6:25, 1824 Nov, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 10]

Matthew 6:25

*Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*

*[A sermon about serving God vs. Mammon.]*

Mammon is a Syriac word that signifies riches and the Saviour in this passage represents God it as a god although it does not appear that any such deity was ostensibly worshipped by the Syrians or any of the ancient heathens though a god of riches under another name had his place in their pantheon. Yet no god is more faithfully served and worshipped than Mammon not only in Christian but in pagan and Mahomedan lands and hence Christ very appropriately exalts him to the rank of divinity. And what is of more importance he informs us that the service of the true God and of Mammon are inconsistent. He does not mean that we cannot render both of them some service but that we cannot devote ourselves to both in such a decided and constant manner as a supreme attachment to them would demand. Nor does he mean that we cannot attempt the acceptable service of both for innumerable instances exist in which men are making that very attempt and spending their lives in the trial. If any such are able from their own experience to contradict this declaration of Christ let them come forward and avow it and substantiate it - or rather if any man on his dying bed has found that he has faithfully served God and Mammon during his life that dying testimony be produced and I will proceed no further. But if it be found a fact that among the countless hosts who have made and patiently made the experiment not one can be produced who did not find at the close of life that he had laboured in vain and spent his strength for nought then let the words of Christ be received as eternal truth and be applied for our reproof or correction or instruction in righteousness. In further urging the subject upon your notice I shall

First show what constitutes the service of God

Secondly what constitutes the service of Mammon.

And finally state the reasons why these two services are inconsistent and impossible.

And here let it be remembered that the declaration of Christ in regard to Mammon or riches holds equally true in respect to any other mere worldly object to which men pay an idolatrous regard. He might as well have said ye cannot serve God and pleasure or ye cannot serve God and ambition. I wish therefore to have the principle reach every earthly object on which men doat with a supreme affection and although for the sake of adhering to the text I shall confine myself to a consideration of the service of Mammon in contrast with that of God yet I would have you bear it in mind my hearers that whatever lust of the flesh or lust of the eye or pride of life you are serving alike incapacitates you for the service of Jehovah.

I am first to show what constitutes the service of God.



And it does not consist in mere profession nor in profession joined with the mere external performance of the rites and ceremonies of religion. In all this there may be no devotion of heart. The fear of punishment or the hope of reward may constitute all the motive to such a course of conduct. But of what value in the sight of God is the correctness of your speculative faith while that faith does not work by love nor purify the heart nor overcome the world. What though your hearts are filled with love to sin. What though your hands are busied in performing the Divine requirements while your hearts are busied with the world. No – the heart must go along with the hands - the affections along with the understanding or no acceptable service is rendered to God. And it must not be a subordinate attachment either. But there must be a supreme consideration of heart and life to God or the service is not such as he approves and rewards. In fact herein consists the true service of God - a supreme consecration of all our powers and faculties to him. Worldly concerns may be attended to - must be attended to: but they must be engaged in from motives derived from the will of the glory of God - and pursued no farther than such motives will carry us. A feeling that we are not our own must mingle with all our exertions and give a direction to all our enterprises. When we labour to acquire property we must do it with a readiness to use that property so as will most honour God - and when opportunities occur we must actually employ it cheerfully as his providence shall direct. When we labour to acquire reputation it must be with the hope of rendering a richer service to the cause of God. In short the true service of God consists in following an inspired rule *whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

Secondly I am to show what constitutes the service of Mammon.

And the fact that a man is industrious does not prove him to be a worshipper of this idol. Indeed under whatever pictures a man neglects to be industrious the very fact of his neglect is enough to convict him of irreligion. Who that has adjusted to sense how much there is for him to do and how short the time he has to perform it in - who that feels himself accountable for every hour of life - will not do with his might what his hands find to do. Point me to the man who has health to labour and yet neglects to provide things honest in the sight of all men and I will point you to one who has very little sense of his accountableness. But industry may be employed in the service of Mammon as well as of God. The mere fact that a man is industrious then does not show him to be employed in the service of Mammon. This must be determined by the motive of his industry. If he is industrious because he wishes to do all the good he can in the world he is not an idolater: but if industrious merely to subserve his own selfish ends - he is one of the votaries of Mammon. Ye who rise up early and set up late and eat the bread of carefulness consider well this distinction and before you proceed any farther enquire what is the motive of your industry.

Nor does it prove an idolatrous devotion to riches for a man to be possessed of extensive property and to be accumulating property. If such a man does not refuse to bestow his property according to his ability - according to his ability I say, when the cause of humanity learning and religion demand it and if to promote the glory of God by promoting the welfare of his fellow man be the grand object of his efforts to increase his possessions such a man is far from the charge of serving Mammon. Such a man however when he comes to make a final disposition of his property will not forget the cause of humanity and religion but these will share largely in the distribution. The devotee of Mammon accumulates property to be left almost exclusively to his heirs: and he scarcely feels under any obligation to do any thing in his last will and testament for learning benevolence and religion. He feels as if his property were absolutely his own - since his own hands have laboriously collected it together. But he who serves God feels that his money as well as everything he possesses is a gift from God and that he is answerable for

the use of it as well as for the improvement of every other blessing. The devotee of Mammon thinks he has done enough when he has well provided for his natural heirs - when he can leave to them a valuable inheritance. But the man who serves God and possesses property feels his obligations reaching farther and that he is born to promote the best welfare of the whole human family so far as in him lies. He does not think it important that his children and relatives be left with a large inheritance if the cause of God must thereby be neglected or stunted. For he knows that descendants are usually more benefitted by correct habits of industry and economy than by munificent legacies. And he feels too that a curse would follow the distribution of that property in which the cause of God did not come in for a share.

A man then may be industrious and rich and thriving in his property who does not serve Mammon. But when he makes the acquisition of property the grand object of life and has no intentions of employing that property save to promote his own interest or the interest of his family he is devoted to Mammon. When he so sets his heart upon riches and is so assiduous in obtaining them that he is led to neglect other and more important duties (things) when he makes their pursuit the supreme object of life and makes every thing else subordinate to it even the service of God - why is he not an idolater as much as the heathen bows down to the stock or the stone? There are many who cannot find time to attend to the duties of religion because their worldly business presses so closely upon them. They would feel as if an hour or two spent daily in the secret or family devotions would be a most enormous tax upon them and they feel as if it were enough to serve God on the sabbath: indeed say they has he not commanded *six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work*. That is they give to Mammon six times more service than to God: and the reason is they love Mammon six times more at least than God. The question is not my hearers whether we do not devote some of our service to God but to whom do we give the first place in our hearts and our services. When the service of God and of Mammon come in competition as they often do which of them prevails with us? When the question is whether we shall be neglecting the duties of religion in a small degree obtained an opportunity of adding something to our property - what course do we follow? Here my hearers is an almost infallible test to determine which is uppermost in our affections: for if in any case we neglect one of our least duties of religion to acquire property we certainly show a preference to riches we show that we love them and better than God.

This touchstone may be applied also to other objects besides riches. When we can advance our interest with men and increase our reputation among them by some slight concessions of principle or by a conformity to customs which we know God does not approve and when by persevering in the strict course of duty we shall lose the good opinion of the world are we disposed to yield or to persevere? The answer to this question will show us which we love best the praise of man or the praise of God. When by conformity to the world in some smaller things we can greatly promote our comfort and by withholding that conformity we shall suffer if we love God better than our ease we shall remain separate and touch not the unclean clean thing: but if our prefer our own comfort we shall yield and if we were faithful in applying this test we could not long hesitate which we do love best.

If we look then carefully to the state of our hearts and see where their predominant affections incline us - and if we enquire which we are most apt to follow when they come in competition the service of God are of Mammon we cannot long hesitate concerning which of these masters we have chosen to reign over us. I proceed thirdly to state the principal reasons why the service of both is inconsistent and impossible.

If you have believe the representations I have given of what constitutes the service of God and the service of Mammon you already see that inconsistency and impossibility. But to impress the truth on the subject where so many of us err I shall state more particularly the points of that inconsistency and

impossibility.

And first these two masters each of them require the supreme attachment and service of those who yield to their authority. God commands us to love him with all the heart and soul and strength - that is we must give him a place in our hearts above all created objects and let every other affection be subordinate to that we bear towards him. In every thing we are to place him first and let him have the best - of our time, talents, and actions. But Mammon requires the same. He will be uppermost in our affections. Every thing else must give way when it comes in competition with his service. There are it is true degrees of attachment to riches but every man who inordinately pursues them makes their acquisition the leading object of life. He accommodates everything else to this. He rejoices more in success in this respect than in any other. In short whether he eat or drink or whatsoever he do he does all to promote this object. Even when he bestows of his property upon benevolent objects he does it chiefly to save his reputation among men knowing that he shall more effectually promote his object of acquiring property by having a good report of the world.

Now if both God and Mammon demand a supreme devotedness of heart and life and ask how is it possible for a man to render such a service to both? The idea of having two supreme objects of attachment is absurd: for the moment we admit a second object to share equally in our affections with another that ceases to have our supreme regard. Our service may be equally divided between two objects but cannot be supremely given to both. If we love God supremely then we shall love Mammon only subordinately - but if Mammon supremely then God subordinately or rather not at all: for ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

Secondly God and Mammon demand of us a service that is directly contradictory. God says, *lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal*. But the very brethren of Mammon's common is that we exert ourselves to accumulate as much treasure on earth as it is possible. God commands us to let our moderation be known to all in our pursuit of temporal things whether riches honors or pleasures: but Mammon says exert every nerve to acquire property your comfort on earth depends upon being rich. Therefore spare no pains to get rich. God says whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do do all to the glory of God. But Mammon says whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever you do do all with a reference to the acquisition of property. Now if any man can move in opposite directions at the same time he can follow both these requirements. But this is a power no human mind ever possessed and therefore no man can serve God and Mammon.

Thirdly God requires of us to act from a principle of disinterested benevolence: but Mammon requires that we act from supreme selfishness. If we are like God we shall act from an enlarged and universal benevolence searching every object in the universe - especially shall we feel that all mankind are our brethren and have claims upon us so far as we can render them assistance. The consequence will be that if we have property we shall be induced to bestow a large part of it upon benevolent and charitable objects. But the essence of Mammon's worship consists in acquiring property for our own aggrandizement or that of our families. He bids us bestow no more upon charitable objects than is absolutely necessary to maintain a decent standing in society. In short he bids us make the promotion of our own selfish interest and views the leading motive of all our exertions. Courses so diametrically opposite to each other as those which God and Mammon point out can no more be followed than the sun can move eastward and westward in the same instant.

Finally God commands us to have a chief reference to another world in all our actions: but Mammon

bids us look chiefly to the present world for happiness. It is certain we can carry nothing out of this world with us - all men know this and do not expect their riches will save them a moment after death. Everyone therefore who makes the acquisition of property the leading aim and effort of his life places his chief hopes upon the present world. But religion teaches us that the world is not our continuing city nor the place of our rest and directs us to seek a city that hath foundations whose builder and Maker is God.

I might present before you other particulars in which the impossibility of serving God and Mammon would be manifest. But more on that point is unnecessary. I close therefore with a few remarks.

First we learn from the subject that the consequence of attempting to serve God and Mammon will be that we shall not serve God at all. I mean we shall render him no acceptable service. He will not have a subordinate place in our hearts. And do you blame God for refusing the crumbs of that sacrifice the choicest part of which has been offered up to a vile idol! Do you blame him for refusing to take a place in a poor dark corner of your heart while detestable Mammon sits enthroned in your choicest affections? Think not that Jehovah will bear the gross insult of having a heart offered to him that is already full of the world. Think not you can perform impossibilities - think not you can serve two masters but boldly renounce the one or the other and at least act the part of independance.

Secondly the subject should lead us seriously to enquire whether we are attempting the impossibility of serving the world and God. We can determine this question if we are faithful in examining our hearts and conduct: and since these are so many who are attempting this service and who sincerely imagine themselves to be the servants of God we learn there is great danger lest we should be among the self-deceived number. I ask then whether we are most prompt and faithful in the service of the world or of God? If of the world we do not love nor serve God at all. In whose service do we take the greatest delight? If in the world's service we take none at all in God's service. Oh, if these questions were faithfully applied what multitudes would be made to see that they were enemies of God who now would resent the charge.

Finally the subject urges us all to an immediate decision whether we will serve God or Mammon. The one or the other we shall certainly serve - we are by nature the servants of Mammon or rather of the world and unless we resolve to serve God we shall continue to be bound down in the servitude of sin. Those then who fancy themselves to be on neutral ground in regard to the subject are grossly deceived. There is no neutral ground here. They are serving Mammon with their whole hearts. And why shrink from an arousal of their feelings. If you think it best to serve Mammon why not boldly say so and give your unbridled efforts to the acquisition of the world and the enjoyment of the world. But ah, remember that if you will serve Mammon here you are preparing to be handed over to the servitude of a master in another world whose little finger will be thicker than Mammon's loins.

Delivered

At Conway November 1824

At Amherst West Parish June 1829

At Amherst West Parish October 1841

## Sermon 234 Exposition of the Third Chapter of Ephesians

[Sermon No. 234, Exposition of Ephesians Ch. 3, 1824 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 10]

The writings of Paul are remarkable not only for an unusual strength and ardor of expression but also for the uncommon length of the sentences. The writer also frequently turns aside in the midst of the sentence and introduces some lively and striking parenthesis extending sometimes through several verses. In the chapter I now propose to consider we have several instances of these peculiarities of expression. And in order that you may obtain a general idea of the apostle's subject and argument I will first read the whole chapter. In the preceding chapter he had exhibited most plainly and faithfully the native depravity of Jews and Gentiles and the glorious plan by which they were rescued from that state and reconciled to God and to one another through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the eternal purpose of God. He then proceeds to allude to himself in connection with this subject.

Read the chapter.

Verse 1.

*For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,*

Some suppose that all between this and the 14<sup>th</sup> verse is a parenthesis and that this first verse connects with the 14th: but the majority of expositors explain it differently. As our translation stands there is certainly an obscurity resting upon the first part of this chapter: but the original is not so obscure.

*For this cause* - His preaching the doctrine that the Gentiles were to be admitted equally into the church with the Jews and become one in Christ

I Paul and a prisoner etc.

Verse 2.

*If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:*

You will not doubt of this since you have heard the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me on your account.

Verse 3.

*How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,*

You have heard that God by immediate revelation made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words - that is in other parts of the Epistle he had hinted at the manner in which God had made known to him this mystery. He does not mean that he had written in a few words concerning the mystery itself: for the whole of the preceding chapters are occupied with it. Paul here claims immediate inspiration for this epistle.

Verse 4.

*Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)*

By which when ye read it ye may perceive my knowledge of the mystery of Christ.

The original meaning of the word mystery was something concealed or kept secret and hence it easily and naturally came to mean something incomprehensible. *Until you*, says Christ to his disciples, *it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God*: that is the great doctrines of the Gospel. These are called mysteries for two reasons: 1. They could be known only by revelation. 2. They can be known only as facts and relate to things incomprehensible by the human mind although many facts about them are perfectly intelligible. For we may know assuredly many things concerning a subject which is beyond the stretch of our faculties to comprehend.

Verses 5 and 6.

*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; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*

Not known so fully in former days as now.

The mystery was the great system of the Gospel.

What was the particular mystery thus revealed to the apostle? (Read the verse)

*Fellow heirs* – of salvation

*Same body* - the same church with equal privileges.

Verse 7.

*Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.*

Paul was prepared by special grace for the work of a minister.

Verse 8.

*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given,  
that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*

A new word found by Paul to express his humility. This feeling was sincere.

How contemptible in view of this text appears spiritual pride!

No less contemptible is affected humility.

*Unsearchable riches of Christ.* Unsearchable because his nature is infinite.

Because his merits are a remedy for an infinite offense.

Because the consequences of accepting him are infinitely glorious.

If Christ be not infinite in his nature - if his merits be not infinite - his riches are not unsearchable.

Verse 9.

*And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the  
beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:*

*Fellowship of the mystery* – common reception of the mystery or plan of salvation by Jews and Gentiles.

*From the beginning* - from eternity. All things in the natural and moral world. Parallel passage John 1:3.

Verse 10.

*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places  
might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,*

*To the intent* - This refers rather to the intent of God in devising and executing the plan of redemption than to the preaching of Paul. The meaning of the verse appears to be this - the plan of bringing Jews and Gentiles into same church through the blood of Christ clearly revealed and preached that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by means of what is done for the church to the principalities and powers (different orders of holy angels) in heavenly places.

Verse 11.

*According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:*

The plan of salvation was laid in the divine mind in eternity - Jesus Christ being *the way the truth and the life*.

Verse 12.

*In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

In whom we have liberty of speech and introduction or access with confidence by believing on him – or through faith in him.

Verse 13.

*Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*

*Faint not – draw not back* because I suffer for you: for it is your glory - it is honorable to you that your teacher is called to endure so much for Christ and that he finds himself supported under his trials.

Verse 14.

*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*For this cause* - On account of his being a prisoner he could not visit the Ephesians he therefore bowed his knees often in prayer to God.



Verse 15.

*Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,*

From whom the whole family of God holy angels in heaven and holy men on earth are named and incorporated into our society or church.

Verse 16.

*That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory,  
to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

*Inner man* - the soul - the new heart.

Verse 17.

*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*

*By faith* that you may have constant intercourse with him by faith.

*Love* - to Christ - to one another and to all holy beings. Love is the root and foundation of all true piety.  
*Now abideth faith hope etc.*

Verses 18 - 19.

*May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length,  
and depth, and height; 19And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,  
that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

*The breadth etc.* of redeeming love.

Bodies have according to geometrician's but these dimensions length breadth and thickness, but Paul imagines himself as it were in the centre where the love of Christ was most gloriously displayed and he looked up to see how high and down to see how low and on the right and left to see how wide and backward and forward to see how far that love reached. From the height of uncreated glory from the very throne of the Godhead he saw the love of Christ reaching down to the depth of abject misery

where the sinner lay sunk in pollution. The distance was infinite - naturally infinite and morally infinite - between the Word that was God and the wretch who was dead in trespasses and sins. But to rescue him from the ruins of such an apostasy Christ resigned the coequal and co-eternal happiness of Jehovah where cherubim and seraphim turned his praise - and took on him *not the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham* and endured all the wretchedness of a wandering persecuted life and all the agony of death upon the cross embittered by the heavy load of the sins of a world. From the throne of highest glory to the cross of deepest shame it appeared to the eye of Paul as it really is to be an infinite distance - infinite in regard to humiliation and infinite in regard to the loss of happiness. Paul too followed in imagination the sinner into the abode of eternal despair - and from the caverns of woe - he stretched his thoughts to that world of glory where the saints sit on a throne at the right hand of the Redeemer and all this immeasurable difference between the condemned man and the approved saint was the result of the love of Christ. Had that love never been exerted all the human family would have rushed headlong into eternal sorrow.

And when the apostle contemplated the breadth of redeeming love he sensed that it was wide as the world - that it comprehended in its embrace men of all ages and all climes - the civilized and the savage the bond and the free the rich and the poor high and low learned and ignorant. Nay what is more comprehended as the apostle himself could testify - it comprehended the chief of sinners. It looked on all in their original corruption with an equal eye an eye melting with infinite compassion. It sent forth a voice of unlimited and beseeching tenderness. *Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money (and without money) and without price.* Among those too who had received Christ their hearts through the special operation of divine grace - given as the secret of Christ's sufferings Paul saw persons of every description of character - from him who dwelt in the palace of the Caesars and rolled in the luxurious chariots to the humblest peasant of Judea's mountains - nay to the very menial of the nobility - from the philosopher of Athens to the most unlettered clown of Asia Minor. They were taken too from all grades of sin from the moral self-righteous pharisees to the vile beastly bacchanalian worshipper of Diana. They were converted also at every period of life from the beardless boy to the silver bearded father. His eye was turned back to the penitent thief on the cross - at one moment mocking the Saviour and the next moment receiving the assistance of his expiring Lord, *to day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

And here in considering the breadth of redeeming love may I not pause a moment to say that he has but a meager apprehension of that love who will say that it may not reach the unregenerate sinner even in his dying moments: and why may we might not hope that the case of the penitent thief is sometimes repeated even in these days? It is true indeed that without the evidence of a subsequent life of holiness no exercises however promising are conclusive proof of a renewed heart: yet there may be probable evidence - evidence that is better than none - evidence that affords consolation to surviving relatives. And here permit me to say that this is a ground of consolation to some in this place who have been recently afflicted. They saw their departed friend aroused from a state of self-righteous delusion in the last periods of life when the sand of life was almost run but while the reason remained unclouded and vigorous. And they saw him when pressed down with the burden of guilt seek and find relief as they may tremblingly hope in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. They saw his faith and hope strengthen and brighten to the last and witnessed in him a sincere confession for past sins of no ordinary magnitude and do all that a dying man could do to repair the mischiefs they had done and to bind up the hearts they had wounded. Let them then bless God for that which at least they may hope was the work of God's Spirit: and let them be careful so to improve by this providence that when they come to die they may not only find the presence of the Saviour to cheer their last moments but be

enabled also to look back upon lives spent in the service of God. And if any are disposed from this example to delay a preparation for death would to God they could have listened to the dying advice of him who if saved will forever ascribe it to the unmerited grace of God.

When Paul thought of the length of the love of Christ he saw it kindling in the eternity that is past and glowing with undiminished light and heat through the eternity that is to come. It is not like the love of mortals liable to change: but being an emanation of underived divinity it remains the same yesterday and today and forever. Christ will guard with an holy jealousy all those who reciprocate his love as the apple of his eye while passing through this world's temptations and trials and spread over them the banner of love in the world of glory: and although justice demands the punishment of the impenitent Christ still feels for those who suffer the same kind of compassion he always felt and though that punishment will be severe beyond expression and eternal in duration it is in perfect consistency with that fullness of benevolence which sways the bosom of the Saviour.

If such are the views of redeeming love on which the eye of Paul was fixed when he wrote the 10th and 19th verses of this chapter and such are the views which the Scriptures every where present it is no wonder that he should add that the love of Christ *passeth knowledge*. Its height and depth length and breadth were limited by nothing but infinity and therefore it absolutely surpassed the utmost stretch of men and angels to comprehend. He prayed that the Ephesians might know all of that love which could be known and when this knowledge was imparted to them he knew they would be ready to be *filled with all the fullness of God* that is be so filled with heavenly knowledge and affections so that there should be no room for any thing but God in their hearts and therefore he prayed that God would thus occupy their souls.

With the sacred writers the transition is easy from doctrines to doxologies. Filled with the subject of redeeming love therefore and having reached its utmost limits he closes the whole with a sublime ascription to Jehovah. And would that we might catch a portion of his spirit while we join with him in saying –

[Verse 20.]

*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,  
according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the church by  
Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Delivered

At Conway May 1824

## Sermon 235 Exposition of First Chapter Ephesians

[Sermon No. 235, Exposition of Ephesians Ch. 1, 1824 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 10]

*[Here Hitchcock introduces the idea of "expository preaching," suggesting in paragraph 1 that it may require less work in preparation. He also mentions doubters of election in paragraph 24. It is possible that Hitchcock preferred to employ this style of preaching on controversial topics such as election, allowing his audience to draw their own conclusions.]*

I have selected for a text this morning the whole of the first chapter of Ephesians. And my intention is to present an exposition of it by endeavouring to give the true sense and applying it to the heart and the conscience. It is also my intention to proceed as occasion may offer with the other five chapters of this Epistle in a similar manner. This is what is called expository preaching and has been earnestly recommended and successfully practiced by many of the ablest and most pious dispensers of the truth. We have certain evidence that this was the mode of preaching adopted in former times. For in the days of Ezra he and the Levites *read the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense and caused them (the people) to understand the reading*. And we know how frequently Christ and the apostles entered into expositions of the Old Testament. The practice of selecting a single verse or sentence as a text and of entering into a systematic discussion of a doctrine or precept is a practice which though convenient and generally useful has not been practiced but a few centuries. In such discussions there is a danger of neglecting too much the holy scriptures and erecting our superstructure of mere abstract reasoning. But in expository preaching we are confined more closely to the scriptures and our inferences must be deduced directly from thence or they will be seen to be false and inconclusive. This mode of exhibiting divine truth has also the advantage of bringing into view the scriptures more in an unbroken mass. There is often a feeling excited in the mind of the uninformed man when he hears any doctrine forcibly urged which he disbelieves that the preacher distorts the bible and by detaching verses from their connection causes them to speak a different language from what they do taken with the context. And that a preacher of contrary belief might make his side appear equally plain. Such a feeling will not exist in regard to expository preaching. Often too the hearer supposes that the preacher dwells more on the doctrines or the duties than the scripture does - but if a man take up the bible in regular order he cannot fall into this deceit. Nor can he be thought as preachers are often thought to be personal in his remarks: and hence when a man finds himself evidently described he will be more likely to set about reformation than if he has a lurking suspicion that it is only a caricature got up by the minister merely to harrow up his feelings. On all these accounts I have long felt it to be a duty to attempt occasionally expository preaching. I am well aware indeed that although this method will not probably require so much manual labor in preparation it will demand a much greater share of reading and study. The original must first be carefully examined and then a large number of explanations and commentaries. From these sources often perhaps clashing and contradictory must the preacher search out the true mind of the Spirit and present the real meaning. I am therefore satisfied that this is a more difficult mode of preaching than the ordinary one and that ministers are more liable to fail in it. Often too a congregation feel much more willing to hear the flights of fancy and addresses to the passions that may be indulged in a textual discourse than to sit patiently endeavouring to ascertain the true sense of the bible. Hence then I spare no sanguine expectations of succeeding in this mode of exhibiting divine truth. I feel constrained however occasionally to make the attempt until I am satisfied it is unprofitable. I begin with the first chapter of Ephesians.

That this Epistle was written by Paul has scarcely ever been doubted by believers in revelation. But there are some expressions in it that have led many to doubt whether it was not originally sent to the Laodiceans instead of the Ephesians. This question however is of little importance and we may with entire safety receive it as it stands addressed to the Saint at Ephesus. In that city Paul had preached long with much success and bitter opposition. There the silversmiths raised the three hours cry of *great is Diana of the Ephesians*. Thus too the numerous converts from the magicians brought their magical works and burned them to the amount of 50,000 pieces of silver. He collected there a large and a flourishing church and did not leave them till the end of three years. At his departure he said to them, *I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise preaching perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears*. About six years after this when Paul was a prisoner at Rome he addressed to the Ephesians this Epistle whose design as will appear as we proceed was to establish them in the faith and urge them to the practice of the religion of Jesus. Where is the Christian that has not noticed the unusually elevated style in which this is written: and who has not felt his heart burn within him while this great apostle not *in words which man's wisdom teacheth but in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth* illustrates the glorious truths and enforces the holy duties of the Gospel?

Verse 1.

*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

Doubtful whether the Epistle is directed to any other than the Ephesians –

*Saints* - holy - not mere professors.

Verse 2.

*Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*From the Lord Jesus Christ* - a prayer to Christ.

Verse 3.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

*Every Spiritual blessing* - in heavenly things or in respect to heavenly things - regeneration - sanctification etc.

## Verse 4.

*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,  
that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

Chosen - elect etc. synonymous - Election of believers here taught -

Chosen *that they might be holy etc.* their holiness is the effect not the cause of their being elected.

## Verse 5.

*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ  
to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

*By Jesus Christ* - Only on account of his righteousness

*Adoption of sons* - Christ says the *children of God* are the *children of the resurrection*. It means them an adoption to be made heirs of heaven.

*According to the good pleasure of his will.* Thus the election to be sovereign - not on account of anything in the creature.

## Verse 6.

*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

If election were the result of man's choice it could not be to the praise of grace: for man would have to thank not God for salvation but his own prudence and foresight in determining to accept salvation.

## Verse 7.

*In whom we have redemption through his blood,  
the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

How many epithets the apostle attaches to the word grace!

The doctrine of atonement clearly brought to view - no less necessary on account of election.

Verse 8.

*Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*

*Wisdom and prudence* - relate to God's method of dispersing his grace through the sufferings of Christ. In this way God had not given occasion to the universe to complain that he was unjust.

Verse 9.

*Having made known unto us the mystery of his will,  
according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*

*Mystery of his will* - the plan of salvation so called because it had been hid in former days and because it was incomprehensible in all its parts.

Verse 10.

*That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather  
together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven,  
and which are on earth; even in him:*

*The dispensation etc.* The Gospel dispensation

Holy men on earth and saints and angels above are meant by all things in heaven and earth - they are to be gathered into one holy church.

Verse 11.

*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated  
according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

Doctrine of election here repeated again with still stronger emphasis.

Verse 12.

*That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

Paul here represents the sovereign election of God to be carrying believers under a strong obligation to live to his glory - to live to the praise of his glory.

Verse 13.

*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth,  
the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed,  
ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*

We - Jews - Ye - Ephesian Gentiles

Sealed with that Spirit of promise and not merely miraculous gifts as these are not the seal of heavenly joys.

Verse 14.

*Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption  
of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

Earnest - the pledge - the surety

*Redemption* etc. till they should enter upon the full enjoyment of the preached possessions

*Purchased* - by the blood of Christ.

Do not these verses teach most clearly the doctrine of election and that this election or calling was inseparably connected with eternal life? The learned have said Paul is here talking of the election of nations to gospel privileges viz. the Jews and Gentiles - but he does not once name Jews and Gentiles in the chapter and speaks only of saints and believers. You who doubt that Paul does then teach the doctrine of election I pray you read attentively and prayerfully this part of the chapter and a parallel passage of this from Romans chapter 8 verses 29 and 30.



Verses 15 and 16.

*Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus,  
and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you,  
making mention of you in my prayers;*

*After I heard of your faith* - does not mean that he never was personally acquainted with them - but that he had heard of their perseverance.

*Give thanks* - for what? That God had enabled the Ephesians to persevere.

Verses 17 and 18.

*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto  
you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:  
The eyes of your understanding being enlightened;  
that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,  
and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

*Hope of his (God's) calling:* -

*Riches of the glory of his inheritance* etc. future and eternal inheritance prepared for the saints.

Verses 19 and 20.

*And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,  
according to the working of his mighty power,  
Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,  
and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,*

*Greatness of his power* - in the conversion of the Ephesians – It is described as the same on omnipotent energy that raised Christ from the dead.

Remark on the energy and beauty of the original.

Verses 21 and 22.

*Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,  
and every name that is named, not only in this world,  
but also in that which is to come:  
And hath put all things under his feet,  
and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*

This applies to his human nature. (Mark 16:19) Different grades of good and bad angels.

Verse 23.

*Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

*The fullness of him* - the members of his church are represented as necessary to constitute the fullness of Christ although he *fills all in all* fills heaven and earth and dwells in every heart from the angels of God to the meanest believers.

#### Inferences from the Chapter

1. We are taught to rejoice in the electing love of God.
2. And that we are chosen to be holy and without blame before him in love
3. And to admire the wonderful plan of redemption.
4. And to pray for one another.
5. And to remember that we are a part of the body of Christ.

Delivered

At Conway April 1824

## Sermon 236 Exposition of Fourth of Ephesians Beginning at the Sixteenth Verse

[Sermon No. 236, Exposition of Ephesians Ch. 4, 1824 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 11]

Remark that the apostle is proceeding to a second inference from his subject.

Verses 17 – 18 – 19.

*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk  
not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,  
Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God  
through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:  
Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness,  
to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

*Life of God* – that principle of religion that assimilates a man to God

*Gentiles* – all who are not Jews

Verses 20 – 21.

*But ye have not so learned Christ;  
If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him,  
as the truth is in Jesus:*

*Christ* – the Gospel of Christ

*Taught by him* – by his word and ministers

*If so be* – seeing that or since

Verse 22.

*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man,  
which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;*

*Conversation* – signifies the general course of conduct

*The old man* – the original principle of corruption in man

*Deceitful lusts* – They deceive men with fancied enjoyment that they never realize.

Verse 23.

*And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;*

If the old man was corrupt it is necessary that it be renewed on order to become pure.

Verse 24.

*And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

*New man* – the opposite of the old man the new and holy principle implanted by the Spirit of God

*After God* – According to God or the image of God

*Created* – that is created which did not exist – therefore holiness did not exist till it was created in the heart by the Spirit

*The holiness of truth* – in opposition to mere morality – Christian holiness can result only from the reception of the truth.

Verse 25.

*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour:  
for we are members one of another.*

Wherefore avoid every sin – putting away lying

*Members* - of Christ – or his church

For one to lie to another is the same as for one member of the body to deceive and injure the other.

Verse 26.

*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

Anger is the uneasiness a man feels upon receiving an injury himself or seeing an injury done to others. It seems this may be to a certain extent indulged without sin. When excited however on trivial occasions or suffered to agitate the mind for a long time it is sinful and may become most sinful.

*Let not the sun go down etc.* to be understood literally – this was the rule of the Pythagorean philosophers.

Family and secret prayer a good preventative of breaking this rule

Verse 27.

*Neither give place to the devil.*

It seems from this verse that to indulge anger till it becomes hatred is one of the most certain modes of laying open minds to the influences of Satan. Malice is a passion that most assimilates us to him.

Verse 28.

*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour,  
working with his hands the thing which is good,  
that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

Theft is a very common vice among the heathen. Indeed the Lacedaemonians never punished it as a crime unless the person were caught in the act: in other cases they considered it an indication of dexterity and it was applauded.

*Let him labour* – Industry recommended. Labour not to hoard up his income but to give to him that needeth

*Working with his hands* – Many regard this as unbecoming.

Verse 29.

*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth,  
but that which is good to the use of edifying,  
that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

*Corrupt communication* – Obscene talk

*That which is good* – if any thing be good – if any opportunity occur for introducing profitable remarks.

## Verse 30.

*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

Sealed or marked – as merchants do their goods – sealed for heaven -

Make yourselves a pleasant habitation for the Spirit of God to dwell in.

The father does not love the society of his rebellious Son -

## Verses 31 – 32.

*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking,  
be put away from you, with all malice:  
And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,  
even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Can there be a more powerful motive than Paul here presents for inspiring Christians with these kind and amiable virtues he recommends in these verses! Forgive even as ye are forgiven of God for Christ's sake? Did Christ descend from glory and clothe himself in human nature and suffer the indignities of persecution and a violent death in order to reconcile the rebels to his Father and can those rebels thus reconciled at so great a sacrifice indulge hatred and malice and bitterness towards one another? Christians hating one another! Refusing to forgive one another? And yet God has forgiven them for Christ's sake! Earth does not furnish a more disgraceful sight as hating angry malicious unforgiving Christians! It is a contradiction in terms – there is no such being – there may be such in the visible church who by men are called Christians but they are not Christians – they are infidels they are heathens. Christ spurns them from him. The real children of God do love and forgive one another – they can not look upon the cross of Christ and do otherwise.

In looking back upon the verses of this chapter made this morning the subject of examination we notice some points of more importance than the rest on which I would fix your attention to supply matter for your private meditations.

1. These verses show us the source of all religious error. Men perceive the language of the bible to be of the simplest and plainest kind and they often wonder why different persons of apparently equal talents differ so entirely in their understanding of it: but the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> verses of this chapter solve the difficulty at once. This wide difference results from the blindness of the heart in other words the understanding is darkened by a depraved heart. So that many who sincerely believe themselves to be right and conscientious in rejecting the truths of the Gospel are in fact merely the dupes of an evil heart. They reject the truths of the Gospel because their corrupt dispositions throw a false medium before the discerning faculty and thus discolour and distort every object. A man who has the jaundice sometimes fancies every thing he sees to be green. A man with an unconverted heart looks at religious truth with a jaundiced eye. The light therefore that he fancies in him is nothing but darkness: and if only the man

whose eye is single that is clear whose body is full of light. We need therefore wonder no more however wide men disagree concerning the truths of religion neither need we charge it upon the obscurity of the bible: for it all results from the corruption of men's hearts which prevents them from seeing the truth though it be written as it is written in sunbeams. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.*

2. These verses teach us that none are Christians however zealous their professions or correct their faith unless they lead holy lives. (Read the 22-23-24 verses)

The genuine effect of a cordial reception of the doctrines of grace as exhibited in the first chapters of this epistle is to lead men to live nobly and unblameably: if therefore any do not lead such lives they have never cordially embraced these truths. They may contend for them and imagine they really believe them but they only hold the truth in unrighteousness - and do not submit to its genuine influence. The truth is every real Christian is born— every real Christian will endeavor to keep all the commandments of God and become perfect as God is perfect. There never was a deeper delusion than to suppose that the mere belief of certain doctrines will save a man. That belief will only sink him the deeper in perdition if he do not exhibit the fruits of it.

3. We learn from these verses the manner in which the Spirit of God is grieved. It is by indulging in sin. In the soul of the believer that Spirit has taken up his residence. That soul he has made his habitation and now if the Christian invite to dwell there the bitterest enemies of the Spirit viz. the various lusts and passions of the old man – if he bring back there those vile companions the Spirit once expelled is it strange that Spirit should be grieved! Is it not strange that he does not abandon forever his habitation and give it up to the dominion of murderers? Yet under a provocation so severe how kind is the language! No threatenings of vengeance are breathed out – but the kind Spirit only tells the Christian that he is grieved that he mourns over his cruel ingratitude. Instead of bursting away from the ungrateful soul and leaving it to ruin that Spirit in the very sentence in which he bitterly mourns the perverseness of the believer tells Him that he has sealed or marked his soul for the day of redemption – for the day of eternal glory!

Delivered

At Conway May 1824

## Sermon 237 Exposition of the Third Chapter of Romans

[Sermon No. 237, Exposition of Romans Ch. 3, 1824 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 11

]

This is one of the most important chapters in the whole bible. It contains an able exhibition of some of those principles that form the very groundwork of the gospel. I ask you therefore my hearers to come to the examination of this chapter with seriousness candour and close attention. Above all let your ejaculatory supplications rise to heaven that you may understand and embrace all the truths it contains and thereby be made wise unto salvation.

It is important that I remind you at the commencement of every new chapter of what the apostle had been teaching in the preceding chapters. For this epistle forms one connected chain of argument and if you lose one link you may lose the force of the whole.

State the drift of the first and second chapters.

He proceeds in the third chapter to consider the objections a Jew would naturally bring to what he had been saying.

Verse 1.

*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?*

That is, if no circumcision but that of the heart avail anything what purpose is circumcision to the Jew - or what advantage hath he above the Gentile? Answer – Verse 2.

Verse 2.

*Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

*Oracles of God* - This shows us what Paul thought of the Old Testament.

*Oracle* - an answer given by the heathen gods or by their priests to those consulting them.

But the Jew says what avails it that we have these oracles if we are not saved by them.

Answer - verse three and etc.

Verses 3 and 4.



*For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*

*Faith of God* - faithfulness to his promises

Verse 5.

*But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)*

Objection three - verse five - that is if our abuse of the scriptures renders the righteousness of God or his method of justification by faith in Christ more conspicuous - as you say it will – would not God be unjust to punish us when we were the instruments of promoting his glory?

I speak as a man disposed to cavil at the Gospel mode of salvation.

Verse 6.

*God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*

Answer verse six - If God were just how would he judge the world.

Verse 7.

*For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?*

Objection three I stated another way verse seven -

Verse 8.

*And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.*

Answer verse eight. That is if an action ceases to be sinful because God's glory is thereby promoted then the principle which it was slanderously reported that the Christians maintained would indeed be true *Let us do evil that good may come*. But in truth the damnation of those maintaining this sentiment was just.

Yet my hearers how often is this principle acted upon even among Christians at this day?

Paul after thus discussing the objections of the Jew to his statements resumes again his comparison between the Jew and the Gentile in regard to the sinfulness of their characters. And here let me remind you my hearers that the remaining verses of this chapter contain most interesting and humbling truths mingled with others calculated to cheer the dying sinner. I ask your solemn attention to the passage that follows in eleven subsequent verses.

Read from verse 9 to 19 –

Verses 9 – 19.

*What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have  
before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;  
As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:  
There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.  
They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable;  
there is none that doeth good, no, not one.  
Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit;  
the poison of asps is under their lips:  
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:  
Their feet are swift to shed blood:  
Destruction and misery are in their ways:  
And the way of peace have they not known:  
There is no fear of God before their eyes.  
Now we know that what things soever the law saith,  
it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped,  
and all the world may become guilty before God.*

A very important enquiry here arises whether Paul meant to apply this description to all mankind. Let us again look to the manner in which he introduces these quotations from the Psalms and Isaiah (Read the ninth and 10th verses). Now what would an honest man without any bias conclude was Paul's intention in this place? Did he mean to apply these extracts to the Jews only or to both Jews and Gentiles - that is to all men? He says he had before proved - that is in the first and second chapters both Jews and Gentiles that they were all under sin: and he introduces these extracts as it seems very evident still farther to establish this point. From the writings of the late able author I quote the following passage on this point. The objector says these passages (from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> verses) described the corruption of the Jews in times of great degeneracy and cannot be considered as a just description of mankind generally. But how does the apostle Paul treat the subject? He takes these same passages a thousand

years afterwards and applies them as descriptive of the character of Jews and Gentiles. Says he referring to the first and second chapters. We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin as it is written - immediately introducing the Old Testament the texts above quoted as a true account of the character of mankind without exception; then stating the end he had aimed at in making such a disclosure of the human character; namely that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God; and then directly bringing us to the final conclusion (in the 20th verse) that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight. It is a connected discourse - an unbroken chain of reasoning. And unless the texts which the apostle here cites from the old testament are greatly applicable to the whole race of man both Jews and Gentiles and in connection with the preceding part of his epistle are actually meant by him to be a description of all the world - no flesh being excepted - the whole reasoning of the apostle is without force his conclusion is broader than his premises quotations he makes in the scripture are not only no proofs of what he wishes to establish but have no kind of relation to it. The point he labours to establish is that both Jews and Gentiles - that all the world have such a character that they cannot be justified by law. But what is their character? It is that which is first described in the preceding part of the Epistle and then in the passages cited from the old testament.

(Read verses 9, 10, 11 etc.)

#### Verses 9 – 11.

*What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have  
before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;  
As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:  
There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

*The apostle manifestly cites these texts for the very purpose of describing still more particularly than he had done the character of all the world. It might indeed be thought from the first part of verse 19 whatsoever the law saith it saith to them who are under the law that the apostle meant to apply what he had just before said to Jews only. But this would hardly agree with the scope of the passage which was to establish a general truth respecting all the world. Besides the first part of verse 19 will easily admit a construction perfectly corresponding with the scope of the whole passage. The apostle would prove that all men are under sin. The Jews could naturally make an exception in their own favour. He tells them that there can be no exception: that what he has quoted from the law that is from their own their own scriptures must certainly relate to Jews as well as to Gentiles. The quotations cannot relate to Jews exclusively or Gentiles because that would not agree with the manner already noticed in which the quotations are introduced. We have before proved, etc. Nor does it so obviously agree with the conclusion verse 19 which relates to all the world. Besides it is difficult not to believe that the writer of some of the Psalms quoted particularly of the 14th extended his views beyond his own nation though he undoubtedly referred to that primarily and in a special sense. When he introduces that description of wickedness which is quoted by the apostle his language is general. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand. The Psalmist then proceeds to give a description not one would think of the posterity of Abraham solely but of the children of men the*

*human race and says they are all gone aside. But we shall come ultimately to the same conclusion if we admit that the passages were originally intended by the Psalmist to relate merely to his own nation. For if such a character belonged to that highly favoured nation for it must of course have belonged to the rest of the world. So the apostle decides when many ages after he attributes that description of character to all the world. On the same principle the passages quoted by him are applicable to us as well as to those who lived in the time of Paul or David; as applicable to us as what the apostle says respecting justification salvation duty or anything else. (Dr. Woods) [Source: L. Woods, Letters to Unitarians, 1822]*

Thus it appears my hearers whether we take this passage in its plain obvious meaning to apply to all mankind or confine it to the Jewish people we are led to the same conclusion respecting the exceeding depravity of man - of all men of the whole world. And in how dreadful a light or rather in what dark shades does it exhibit the human character while unrenewed! With an overwhelming force therefore does the conclusion of the apostle come home upon us when he says in the 20<sup>th</sup> verse - as the grand result at which he has been arriving in the three first chapters - (Read the 20<sup>th</sup> verse).

Verse 20.

*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified  
in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

Who then can be saved exclaims a converted sinner? Let Paul answer

Read 21st and 22nd verses.

Verses 21 and 22.

*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,  
being witnessed by the law and the prophets;  
Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ  
unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

No difference in regard to justification. Here as if to set the question forever at rest and stop the mouth of every caviller Paul repeats over again the charge of sinfulness upon all men.

Read the 23rd verse.

Verse 23.

*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Yet blessed be God desperately wicked as we are we are not without hope.

Read 24th verse.

## Verse 24.

*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

But in what way was the redemption affected?

Read 25th and 26 versus.

## Verses 25 and 26.

*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,  
to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,  
through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness:  
that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

The meaning of these verses seems to be clearly this. *Him (the Savior) hath God set forth as a propitiatory sacrifice through faith in his blood for an exhibition of his own righteousness in regard to the remission of sins committed in past ages through the merciful forbearance of God. This propitiatory sacrifice was I say intended for an exhibition in this age of the world of his own righteousness; so that he might be and might now be seen to be a righteous moral Governor and at the same time be the justifier of all that believe in Jesus Christ.* (Murdoch)

No other passage of scripture exhibits so clearly as this the manner in which the sacrifice of Christ availed to procure the pardon of the sinner etc.

The remainder of this chapter will be deferred to a future opportunity. In the meantime I cannot close without remarking

First how naturally the inferences of Paul in regard to justification by faith and the doctrine of atonement flow from the great fact he had established of the entire and dreadful depravity of the human heart. Ministers should follow his example and first endeavour to convince men of their sinfulness.

Secondly if we take away the idea that man is thus depraved the doctrines of justification by faith and the atonement fall to the ground with it – or appear of little importance.

But if man be thus depraved we see thirdly the necessity of regeneration to fit him for heaven.

And fourthly the need of divine influences to move first upon his heart.

Fifthly, if the character of all men is thus desperately wicked – then such is our individual character.

We seek too sixthly the necessity of this conviction on our own depravity in order to our embracing the offers of mercy by faith in a crucified Saviour.

Finally if any of us are not yet convinced of our native and entire depravity let us be persuaded to study this chapter with prayer. If it does not clearly teach that doctrine I do not wish any of you to embrace it merely because I have thus explained it. I only ask you to take this chapter today with you into your closets and see what is its most obvious meaning. Think not that it is of little importance whether it be true or not that men are by nature entirely depraved. Would Paul spend three chapters to prove it if it were not of importance. Nay he places it at the very foundation of the gospel and the great reason why so many continue to neglect religion is that they are in doubt whether they are altogether depraved. Once convince a man that he was as great a sinner as Paul here declares both Jews and Gentiles to be and he could not rest easy a moment till he had become justified by faith. In urging you then to pray over this chapter and to study it patiently I feel as if I were urging you to that on which your salvation would probably depend. Be not induced to reject the doctrine of entire depravity because you never said anything in your heart so bad as Paul here describes: for you may be (and if you have never experienced a change of heart you are) what Paul calls a natural man and he says that the *natural man receiveth not, etc.* Pray to God therefore for a new heart and a new Spirit and thus the things of the Spirit will not appear foolishness to you: nor will the depravity Paul describes in this chapter be any greater than that which you will see in your own heart.

Delivered

At Conway December 1824

## Sermon 238 Exposition of Second Chapter of Romans

[Sermon No. 238, Exposition of Romans Ch. 2, 1824 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 11]

Recapitulate the substance of the first chapter.

Verse 1.

*Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest:  
for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself;  
for thou that judgest doest the same things.*

Does the apostle mean here that we are never to pass any judgment upon the errors or sinfulness of others? When for instance a man has been guilty of murder are we prohibited from judging him? By reading the two subsequent verses we may perhaps discover his true meaning.

Read verses two and three.

Verses 2 and 3.

*But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.  
And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same,  
that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

The judgments then which Paul condemns are those in which the person judging is guilty of the very same conduct he condemns in others or of others of equal malignity. This will be still further evident if we read the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd verses where the same subject is continued and applied to the Jews. The grand object of Paul in this chapter is to show the Jews that in regard to justification before God they were in no better condition than the heathen. Yet in the first part of the chapter he applies the principle to all mankind – *O man whosoever thou art*. That is any man is inexcusable who while he condemns the heathen as deserving the wrath of God fancies himself on account of his peculiar privileges or moral habits to be too good to incur the displeasure of heaven and who fancies that merely on account of his goodness he shall be justified and saved. For in truth we all of us have by nature the same sinful dispositions and the only reason why one man is worse than another is that God restrains one and abandons another. All men then without exception if they judge others as deserving of punishment while they free themselves from such a charge are inexcusable because they are guilty of essentially the same thing - they are guilty of sin in some form or another: and we cannot say certainly in what form it is most offensive to infinite purity. They all possess originally a similar inclination to sin and therefore in regard to justification before God. The great theme of this epistle - all men stand upon the same footing. If a man then of whatever character condemns some others as exposed to destruction on

account of their wickedness while he supposes himself too good to be condemned by Jehovah - it is such sort of judgment the apostle aims at in the first verse. And what man who knows anything of his own heart does not join him in the sentiment? How can any man who passes such judgments imagine that he shall escape the judgment of God?

Men however are prone to misconstrual and abuse the divine goodness - and hence the apostle says verses four and five etc. (read them)

Verses 4 and 5.

*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering;  
not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?  
But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself  
wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;*

Let us put these questions to ourselves. Think my hearers of adding wrath to wrath punishment to punishment day by day.

Verse 6.

*Who will render to every man according to his deeds:*

The apostle means to impress on his readers the principles by which God will judge men - according to their works. He does not say they will be justified by the works but be judged according to them. Works are the test of faith - any faith not producing them is spurious - is dead.

Let us apply the principle to ourselves.

By such a rule of judgment should we stand or fall?

Verses 7, 8, 9, and 10.

*To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and  
immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth,  
but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish,  
upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;  
But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good,  
to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:*



The apostle proceeds to illustrate the rule of the judgment still further and to apply it especially to the Jews whom he meant to prove to be shut up under sin.

Will then says the self righteous man I shall be saved: for I endeavour to do well and to be patient in well doing. But I ask have you ever considered what it is to do well? It implies that you have previously repented and submitted your heart to God or you cannot do well. It is absurd to suppose you can do well in the sight of God with an impenitent unrenewed heart. (Show wherefore)

Verse 11.

*For there is no respect of persons with God.*

God treats men precisely according to their real characters - not according to peculiar privileges.

Verse 12.

*For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law:  
and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;*

Without law without a right revealed law.

It appears from this verse that a part of the heathen at least must perish.

Verse 13.

*For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*

*Doers of the law* - those who have kept every one of its requirements.

Verse 14.

*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law,  
these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:*

Reason and conscience are the law that directs them.

Verse 15.

*Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts,  
their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean  
while accusing or else excusing one another;*

*Work of the law* - the sum and substance of it - or the office of it directing what to do.

The gentiles accused one another of evil conduct and approved of good conduct which should show that a moral rule - or law was written on their hearts.

It is not implied in these verses that the heathen without revelation perform any spiritual service - such as is acceptable to God: they are here said to do no more than many a deist and moral man does in Christian lands who is utterly ignorant of love to God and of holiness.

Verse 16.

*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

Connected with the 12<sup>th</sup> verse. The apostle keeps his eye fixed on the final judgment. Let us keep our eyes fixed there and we should cease to think of ourselves and our service.

Verse 17.

*Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,*

Paul now comes directly to his main object in this chapter which he had hitherto kept out of sight and addresses the Jews boldly – Read to the 25th verse.

Verses 18 – 25.

*And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.*

We read in several places that the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles for the ungodly conduct of the Jews (Exodus 36:23). *And I will sanctify my great name which was profaned among the heathen which ye have profaned in the midst of them.*

How often is the name of God profaned by professing Christians before the world!

The Jews trusted in the rite of circumcision as if it ensured their covenant relation to God - however gross their violations of the moral law. It is the object of Paul and the remaining verses of this chapter to prove to them that circumcision apart from perfect obedience would be of no avail in their justification. Nay that the very heathen who through the force of conscience performs internally good deeds were their superiors. (Read to the end)

#### Verses 26 - 29.

*Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

#### Remarks

1. We learn from this chapter that true religion does not consist in external rites and ceremonies but in the holy heart. The Jews at the period in which this Epistle was written and for many ages previous had maintained that their observance of the ceremonial law would ensure them the rewards of heaven. *No circumcise person goes to hell*, say their writers, *God having promised to deliver them from it for the merit of circumcision. All Israelites have their portion in the world to come: and that notwithstanding their sins yea though they were condemned for their wickedness.* None are to be found at this day who will dare to maintain that an observance of ordinances and ceremonies will save them: and yet many seem to rely greatly on these things. We find them who are very exact in externals who give no evidence of a change of heart but who nevertheless expect finally to reach heaven. It is obvious they feel as if God could never punish everlastingly persons so amiable and exemplary and moral and conscientious in

regard to the outside of religion as they are. But God has here told him that unless they had the circumcision of the heart the very heathen will rise up in judgment against them.

2. This chapter teaches us that there is another way in which men can be saved besides the one so frequently recommended by faith in Christ. Come hither ye who deny the holy scriptures – and ye who regard a change of heart and all experimental religion a mere enthusiasm – and ye who have so much of the world to attend to that you cannot find time to attend to religion and ye who are given up to worldly pleasures – come ye all and listen for since you will never be saved by faith in Christ you need some expedient by which you can be saved without it. Paul has pointed out this new method in the chapter before us; and it consists in nothing more than to live without sin from the first to the last moment of existence - to live so as Christ did on earth and so as Adam did before his apostasy - to live without one sinful thought - one sinful feeling - one sinful word or one sinful action from the cradle to the grave. If you can comply with these conditions you are safe. There is however one difficulty in the way which I cannot now stop to assist you in removing. It is this: you have already sinned for there is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not. Hence the Scriptures conclude all under sin.

3. The chapter shows us the dreadful condition of the heathen who have no written revelation. I am not going in this place to discuss the question whether there may not be here and there a heathen who leads a holy life and who will finally be saved. But Paul expressly declares, *that as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law*. Now what is the general and almost universal character of the heathen? Can there be any doubt but they are guilty of the grossest abominations after so many eye witnesses have testified that such is the fact? Listen to the declaration of one who has spent 20 years among them - *I must observe says he that amidst a pretty large acquaintance with the heathen I have never seen one man who appeared to fear God and work righteousness. On the contrary the language of the apostle seems most strikingly applicable to them all - there is none righteous no not one etc.* Now if such be their character the apostle declares that they will perish. Let the thought arouse the friends of missions to redouble their efforts. Let them remember that if the apostle is to be believed before this days sun goes down many thousands will have perished who might have been saved if they have ever had the gospel. Oh how unlike God must that heart be that can refuse to do anything for those whom an apostle declares to be perishing!

4. The chapter teaches us that the doom of those who perish under the light of the gospel will be inexpressibly awful. Paul evidently makes a distinction between the fate of the heathen and the fate of the sinner under the gospel. While those who sin without law perish without laws that is are punished as God sees fit, those who sin in the law will be judged by the law. And the law contains in its penalty all that is appalling and horrid. No terrific figure in human language is left unemployed in boding forth the doom of the finally impenitent. You now look on the condition of the heathen impenitent sinners as vastly more wretched than your own and you shudder at the thought of exchanging places with him. But dying with your present character you will sink as much below him in eternity as you are now above him and you will look up to him then and sigh to be in his condition as much as you now shrink from it. How can you then continue another day in a state of impenitence and sin! Every day's delay only increases the treasure of wrath as the apostles calls it - or the amount of wrath that will fall on you. God will be more angry with you to night than he was this morning - more angry with you tomorrow than to day and so on every succeeding day till his thunderbolts break upon your head.

But these truths make no impression on the sinners heart. He will not listen to the voice of God – he will not believe in the reality of his threatenings. Well then let him go - go thou careless stupid soul and enjoy the little comfort you can of this world - but this is all you will enjoy. Go - trifle away the days of

grace the accepted time. It will be short - the night will be long. Take a little more sleep a little more slumber: for the day is at hand when you will sleep no more unless you can sleep in a lake of fire and brimstone unless you can sleep amid the gnawings of the undying worm unless you can sleep in the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Delivered

At Conway December 1824

## Sermon 239 Exposition of the First Chapter of Romans

[Sermon No. 239, Exposition of Romans Ch. 1, 1824 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 11]

The Epistle to the Romans was written A.D. 57 or 58 and written from Corinth as might be shown by a reference to various passages of the Acts. The Christians at Rome to whom it was addressed were for the most part Jews residing in that city.

The grand design of this Epistle seems to be to impress on those to whom he wrote the excellency and necessity of the gospel plan of salvation by faith in the blood of Christ and to urge them to conduct agreeably to the gospel. After some preliminary remarks he attempts to prove the necessity of such a plan of justification as the gospel proposes.

1. Because both Gentiles and Jews had fallen into a most abandoned condition and the Jews though condemning others were themselves no better. This proof occupies the three first chapters.
2. He proves in the fourth chapter that Abraham and David sought justification as the gospel points out by faith.
3. He shows that by the gospel plan of justification believers are brought into a state so happy as to turn their very afflictions into an occasion of joy.
4. He proves that the loss sustained in the fall of Adam is gloriously repaired to all believers in Christ the second Adam. These two points occupy the fifth chapter.
5. He proves in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter that the gospel mode of justification by faith only so far from absolving Christians from their obligation to lead holy lives greatly increases their obligation.
6. He draws in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> chapters a parallel between the Mosaical economy and the gospel dispensation to convince the Jews of the superior efficacy of the latter in forming the soul to holiness.
7. The calling of the gentiles was a stumbling stone to the Jews and in order to fully vindicate the dealings of God in this respect and lay open in the plainest manner his right to do what he will with his own he enters largely into the subject in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> chapters and discusses very fully that most difficult and offensive part of the divine character.

The remainder of the epistle consists of various practical instructions and exhortations serving as the application of the doctrinal part he had so fully discussed.

From this summary you will be able my hearers to form some general ideas of what this rich epistle contains. May God enable us to understand it dispose us to receive it and practice its requirements!

Read four verses

## Verses 1 – 4.

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures, Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

*According to the flesh*

*According to the spirit of holiness* etc. seems to refer to those wonderful outpourings of the Holy Spirit that succeeded the resurrection of Christ whereby that event was proved and he demonstrated to be the son of God. It may refer also to prophecies concerning Christ dictated by the Spirit.

## Verse 5.

*By whom we have received grace and apostleship,  
for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:*

From whom I have received grace and apostleship that he might be employed as the instrument of bringing sinners of all nations to the obedience of faith - that is accepting the Redeemer's mercy and becoming subject to his authority.

## Verses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

*Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*

## Nothing difficult

## Verses 11 -12.

*For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift,  
to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together  
with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

*Spiritual gift* - the power of working miracles which was conferred only by the laying on of an apostle's hands.

Verses 13 -14.

*Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you,  
(but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.  
I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.*

*I am a debtor.* Because he had been so remarkably distinguished by the grace of God in his conversion it laid him under obligations to preach the gospel to all within his reach.

Verses 15 -16.

*So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.  
For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto  
salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

*Power of God* - grace of God in changing and purifying the heart.

*Greeks* - remarks on the expression

Verse 17.

*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith:  
as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

The apostle now enters on the great subject of his epistle and states the essence of the gospel - *Righteousness of God* - not the attribute of righteousness but the righteousness he has provided for the justification of the sinner. *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*



Verse 18.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

*Ungodliness and unrighteousness* (explain)

Verses 19 – 20.

*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

The invisible things of him (God) ever since the creation of the world are clearly seen, etc.

Verses 21 – 22 - 23.

*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

*When they knew God* (explain)

Became vain in their imaginations – became foolish by their own reasonings (MacKnight)

Verse 24 to end.

*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did*

*not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

The present state of the heathen answers to this description.

From this chapter we learn

1. That man without a revelation have light sufficient to lead them to the principle of love and service the true God if they will but improve it.

Hence the heathen are without excuse.

2. But we learn to that man will not improve it. They imprison the truth and unrighteousness.

3. We learn what it is to be abandoned of God.

Hence we should fear being thus abandoned.

Finally if the heathen with the little light they enjoy be without excuse what will be our guilt and our doom if we do not improve the vastly brighter light we enjoy.

Imagine yourselves in the condition of the heathen - and then transport yourself back into a Christian land - and what excuse have you for neglecting the gospel?

In order to determine whether we improve the light we enjoy we have only to enquire whether we are real devoted Christians - if not we hold the truth in unrighteousness.

If the heathen are without excuse talk no more excuses for sinning in a Christian land.

When I think of this subject seriously my hearers I am astonished at the stupidity of the human heart. For with the light of the gospel so bright and glorious shining full in their faces how many there are in Christian lands - in Christian societies - in Christian assemblies - in this house of God who have never yielded their hearts to the power of truth nor devoted themselves to God. Almighty God holds over their heads in his right hand the sword of justice thirsting for their blood and in his right hand the thunderbolts of his eternal wrath struggling to get sent. And yet there they sit as careless and unconcerned and feeling as secure as if perfectly out of danger. Nay they resent it if the faithful minded plainly tell them of that danger and feel as if he were endeavouring unnecessarily to alarm them. What a poor degraded ignorant heathen without excuse and yet these men expect to escape! O how much of the spirit of the heathen cleaves to the man who does not let the gospel convert him. So you say the age of miracles is past? No - here is something beyond a miracle - a man living unconcerned and without

God under the light of the gospel. A man with his eyes wide open and though surrounded by all the menacing terrors which Jehovah can array against him yet sensible to all and careless and secure. Do you say the age of miracles is past? Then how can such a man ever be converted!

Notes on cover page:

Deacon Ware and wife ask prayers

Conference

Bible Class

Nereford's School

Delivered

At Conway November 1824

## Sermon 240 Exposition of the Second Chapter of Ephesians

[Sermon No. 240, Exposition of Ephesians Ch. 2, 1824 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 11]

It was a grand object with the inspired writers to keep men humble. When therefore they addressed the Christian they not only held before him the strictness of the law of God but pointed him back to his life before conversion bidding him to *look to the rock whence he was hewed and to the hole of the pit whence he was digged*. And among them all none describes with a bolder or more unsparing hand nor touches with a deeper shade the original native corruption of man than the apostle Paul. His account of the universal corruption of all men by nature in the second chapter of Romans and of the deep-rooted depravity of his own heart even after conversion in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of the same Epistle, will never be forgotten either by those who believe or those who deny the doctrine of entire native depravity. The second of Ephesians is of the same character. In no other part of scripture has it required such ingenuity to distort and discolour the true meaning of the bible as in these chapters. Genius has exhausted itself in proposing new translations and emendations and to hunt up strange and far-fetched meanings to be put upon these chapters and still amid all the rubbish that has been cast upon them their true meaning will break forth in the plain unlettered man of godly sincerity can hardly mistake it. The charge Paul makes upon the Ephesians in the three first verses of the chapter now before us would excite the deepest disgust in many churches at this day who maintain that man by nature is innocent and pure and an object of the Divine complacency.

### Verse 1.

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

Dead to Spiritual enjoyment  
And Spiritual desires  
And Spiritual employments  
To the love of God and everything holy

### Verse 2.

*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world,  
according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now  
worketh in the children of disobedience:*

*Wherein* – that is in trespasses and sins

*Accord. to the course of this world* - world means the unregenerate world. The course was therefore to remain dead in trespasses and sins. This fixes the charge of entire depravity on the whole human family.

And what is the course of this world? According to the prince of the power of the air – power equivalent

to force - the troops of a general or prince are his force - it means of Satan - because he is chief of those evil spirits whose residue is in the air. The course of the world then was according to - or agreeable to the will of Satan. This is another heightening of the charge against the Ephesians.

*The Spirit etc.* according to the prince of that spirit more literal – Thus the spirit of the world is represented as agreeing with the spirit of Satan.

### Verse 3.

*Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past  
in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;  
and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

*We* - we Jews as well as you Gentiles – Thus he comprehends all Christians in the charges he had made on the Ephesians and the unregenerate.

*Desires of the flesh* - carnal lusts and appetites

*Desires of the mind* - rather of the imagination ambition pride

*Children of wrath* - exposed to wrath by nature, deserving of wrath - meet for wrath

*By nature* – what can this mean but as they were born into the world?

*Even as others* - Who are others? He had included the Ephesians and the converted Jews - who remained but the unconverted.

Here then does the apostle charge not merely the Ephesians - but the converted Jews use not merely these but all men under heaven while in an unregenerate state with having been dead in trespasses and sins with living habitually according to the will of Satan and indulging a similar Spirit as indulging the vilest most gratifying the most impure imaginations – and as being naturally the children of wrath - exposed to the eternal wrath of God. Does the pride of human nature result in such a sweeping and humiliating charge? Then let it prove if it can that Paul was not inspired - or let it if it can show that this was not the meaning of the apostle. But every effort of the most learned men to affix any other intelligible meaning to this passage has served only to make them ridiculous - and to show how weak is human wisdom when compared with the wisdom of God. Men however must either get over the plain obvious meaning of this passage or acknowledge man to be naturally and entirely depraved and the necessity of regeneration. These were the verses that once struck a deathblow to the system of Dr. Scott that men are not entirely depraved and do not need regeneration agreeably to the views of Locke and Whitby. He had ever begun the composition of a sermon in support of this false system when these verses occurring to him to use his own language *shook his whole system to the foundation*.

### Verses 4 and 5.

*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,  
Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,  
(by grace ye are saved;)*

After humbling the Christian sufficiently and alarming sufficiently the sinner by this awful exhibition of his native wretchedness Paul turns to a more grateful theme and to deliverance from this dreadful state.

Salvation resulted from mercy and love.

How great love to save those who were ever dead in sins!

*Together with Christ* - the relationship between the Christian and the believer is so intimate that the quickening of Christ from the grave is a means of quickening him also.

*By grace are ye saved* - certainly so if by nature in such a condition - and if Christ died for us while enemies.

Verse 6.

*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

*To sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus* - Christ made it certain the believer would sit in heavenly places at last - and even in this world grant him sometimes a foretaste of it - his privileges are heavenly - his hopes are heavenly – his desires are heavenly.

Verse 7.

*That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace  
in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

That he might show to future ages the astonishing riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through the suffering of the Saviour. And show this not only in this but a future world.

Verse 8.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

Grace is the moving cause - faith the condition

Yet even this faith is not of ourselves but the gift of God.

To suppose that not to refer to faith but to the subject generally makes a weak tautology - but suppose to refer to faith and the thought beautifully rises -

What a state to self righteousness!

Verse 9.

*Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

We are accused of representing works as of no importance: but do we exceed this verse? etc.

If men were saved in any way by their works they would boast.

Verse 10.

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,  
which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

How expressly are good works here ascribed to the special grace of God!

*Good works* are used in the N. Testament to signify only the fruits of the Spirit or the deeds of holy men and never to signify the moral deeds of men before their conversion. (Scott)

*Ordained* - more literally *before prepared us to walk in them.*

*Prepared us* by his special grace.

Verse 11.

*Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh,  
who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;*

Never forget your former wretchedness -

The Jews called the gentiles the uncircumcised and despised them.

## Verse 12.

*That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*

But your chief misery lay not in the want of external rites but in your moral corruptions.

*Without Christ* - The Gentiles were emphatically so.

*Aliens* etc. - destitute of the scriptures and the ordinances of religion.

*Covenants of promise* - With Jacob etc. and Abraham

*Without God* - atheists

*Without hope* - any well grounded hope.

How offended would the sinner be if a faithful Christian were thus to address him!

## Verse 13.

*But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

*Made right* to God and to one another -

## Verse 14.

*For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*

*Our peace* – the procurer of peace with God and one another - Jews and Gentiles

*Middle wall* - alluding to the wall in the temple that separated the Jews and Gentiles - prejudices – rites and ceremonies.



Verse 15.

*Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;*

*Law of Commandments* - Ceremonial law

Christ had fulfilled the types of that law and abolished it.

*Of twain one new man* – out of two opposing parties to form one harmonious society or church

Verse 16.

*And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

*In one body* - this relates to the church of Jews and Gentiles made one body

*Enmity* - between all men and God - how did the cross slay it?

It removed the obstructions on the part of God

And those on the part of man.

Verse 17.

*And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.*

*He came and preached* - by his apostles and ministers.

*Afar off* - the Gentiles

*Nigh* - the Jews

Verse 18.

*For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

Through Christ both Jews and Gentiles may worship God by the aids of the same Spirit.

Verse 19.

*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners,  
but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;*

How beautifully all believers are thus represented as constituting one family – and that family the family of God!

Verses 20 - 21.

*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ  
himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed  
together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

The Christian church is here represented as a building - whose firm foundation was the prophets and apostles - what they had written the doctrines and precepts they taught of which Jesus Christ is the chief bottom cornerstone.

*Groweth unto an holy temple* - By the addition of new converts -

How unbecoming and unfortunate to have any parts of the building of defective materials

Verse 22.

*In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

The church is the temple and the Spirit of God dwells in it -

#### Recapitulation

1. Christians are taught their dreadful nature depravity. Are we willing to confess ourselves guilty?
2. Impenitent men are taught from this chapter their entire native depravity. With what feelings do they regard the charges here made upon them?
3. But the Christian and the sinner are here pointed to a method of escape from this dreadful state -

even through the blood and Spirit of Christ.

With what feelings of gratitude ought we this day to look upon that glorious plan of escape!

4. We learn from this chapter that true Christians are one -

One in essential doctrines

One in feelings

One in promotion of Christ's kingdom

One in their aims - desires - hopes and fears.

5. We learn from this chapter that the Spirit of God dwells in the true church of Christ.

Does he dwell in this church?

Delivered

At Conway May 1824

## Sermon 241 The Beam to be First Cast Out of Our Own Eye

[Sermon No. 241, "The Beam to be First Cast Out of Our Own Eye," Matthew 7:5, 1824 May, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 11]

Matthew 7:5

*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye;  
and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

It appears to us at this day to be rather a stretch even of figurative language to speak of a beam lodged in the eye of a man since the eye is so much the smallest. But Dr. Campbell whose skill and judicious caution as a critic have long been established is decidedly of opinion that the word here translated a beam means in this place nothing more than a thorn and ought to be so translated. His translation of the verse is *hypocrite, first take the thorn out of thine own eye; then thou wilt see to take the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

Our Saviour in another place gave a practical exposition of this verse. The Jews brought to him a woman debased in adultery and by the Levitical law she must be stoned to death. And they urged him to decide upon her case. But he replied *he that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her.* He did not mean he that is altogether sinless but he that is conscious of his own innocence and is not sensible that he is guilty himself if not of the same yet of some other equally hateful sin, let him cast the first stone.

The sentiment of the text then appears to be this that it is hypocrisy in us to censure or admonish others for sins of which we ourselves are guilty or when we are guilty of other sins equally hateful and heinous. This principle is so obviously true that every man approves of it when first proposed to him yet alas it is to be feared most of us violate it.

And the farther consideration of this subject I remark first that there are occasions in which it is a duty to censure and admonish others for their faults.

The text neither asserts nor denies this. Christ condemns a particular manner of censuring and admonishing others without saying in this place whether censures and admonitions be ever justifiable. This declaration is predicated upon the fact that censures exist among men but does not determine their general lawfulness or unlawfulness. I assert however that other parts of scripture render them sometimes necessary and a duty - often a most painful duty. All the prohibitions against judging others contained in scripture are directed against partial severe and unrighteous judgments. But we are commanded to *judge righteous judgment.* We know that government is an ordinance of heaven: but one branch of government in every country consists in passing judgment upon the actions of others. All the judicial department of government is erected for this very purpose and the wisest and best of men are usually selected whose lives are all spent in condemning the guilty and acquitting the innocent. And in free governments where rulers are chosen by the people how shall oppression and maladministration be avoided unless the electors pass judgment upon those offered as candidates and censure by neglect at least those who abuse the power put into their hands: and punish still more severely those who make

an effort to overturn the government itself and the liberties of the land?

Censures also are often necessary and become a duty in the intercourse of social life. There are certain rules of good breeding and morals the observance of which is essential to the existence of anything like a civilized and valuable social intercourse rules too that have obtained the hearty assent and support of the great majority of the most worthy persons in every age. But there are always some lawless innovators who trample on these rules: and how shall they be restrained and the mischief prevented? In no other way but by a decided reprobation of their vulgarity or indecency. For in social intercourse there is no regular tribunal to which the offender can be brought and tried. Public opinion is the only tribunal in such cases and the only way to keep society pure is firmly to reprobate every encroachment of the vile or the ignorant.

It often likewise becomes imperiously necessary to pass censures and admonitions in the religious world. It cannot be doubted for a moment that such was the practice of Christ and his apostles. There is scarcely an equal in severity to Christ's reproof of the hypocritical pharisees: and the instances in the Epistles are so numerous as not to require to be mentioned. If any say that Christ and the apostles were inspired and therefore their example is not intended for our imitation because we cannot as they did infallibly know that our censures are deserved; it may be replied that Christ and his apostles directed those who were uninspired to pass judgment upon others in regard to their belief and practice which directions are binding upon the men of the present day. To Timothy a minister of the Gospel - and through him to all ministers - Paul directs *reprove rebuke exhort with all long suffering and doctrine*. To Titus under similar circumstances he says - *wherefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith. These things speak and rebuke and exhort with all authority*. To the Galatians Paul says, *though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*. This direction implies that the Galatians must judge concerning the sentiments of the ministers who came among men and if they found them deficient they were to censure them. And John expressly directs all Christians, *to try the Spirits whether they be of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world*. He also says to the elect lady, *if there come unto you and bring not this doctrine receive him not into your house neither bid him Godspeed*. Indeed without judging of the religious character of others how can we know whether we ought to receive them to our communion. I mean not that we ought positively to say that such an one is or is not a Christian but we must judge whether he gives satisfactory evidence to our mind that he is so or is not so. Otherwise we must treat all men as if they were washed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God: and ministers of the Gospel must address all men as if they were fit for heaven. If we may not censure the erroneous doctrines and practices of ungodly men how are we to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints - how shall we maintain church discipline - how shall we resist the flood of error when it is rolling over us and burying the Gospel and all that is dear to man in ruins?

But it is a waste of breath to endeavour to prove a principle so plain as this and if any have such a stretch of charity as to believe themselves forbidden by the gospel from judging and censuring any man for his errors and evil practices however gross we lead him to embrace in his indiscriminate brotherhood all mankind the bad as well as the good nor do we and the him his communion. But if censures are ever necessary and a duty yet they are to be found only under certain restrictions. If we have a beam in our own eye we cannot see clearly to pull the mote out of our brother's eye. If our hearts and lives are as bad or worse than those of the man we reprove the first businesses is to correct ourselves and then shall we be prepared to reprove our brother. Before we undertake the works in regard to him there is a work for us in regard to ourselves. If we are sensible of a beam in our own eye we must pluck it out resolutely: and if we are not conscious of it still it may be there and it becomes extremely important that

we be made to see it. The second part of this discourse will be devoted to pointing out some of the methods by which we may discover whether there be a thorn or a beam in our own eye.

And the first grand means of making such a discovery is to enter into thorough and prayerful self-examination.

It is a bad mark if on looking back upon our past lives we perceive that a censorious spirit has been indulged by us. If we have been forward in reproaching our brethren and backward in defending them from slander. For that very disposition amounts to a thorn in our vision and renders us unfit for the office of censors.

In this work of self-examination we ought to enquire particularly concerning any secret sins we may be in the habit of indulging and which if known to the world would in public estimation be more heinous than the sin of our brother which we are about to reprove. If we come to the conclusion that were the whole of our characters known it would appear as bad as that of the brother we censure then we must improve it before we are fit to be censors.

We must enquire also what are our secret feelings towards mankind. Do we from the heart wish their happiness and sincerely pray for it? And is there no individual towards whom we harbor malicious revengeful or bitter feelings - is there any one for whom we do not pray in our closets? Is there anyone whose prosperity gives us pain? Any one in whose outward losses we secretly rejoice? Any one with whom we cannot cordially sympathize affliction and rejoice in prosperity? If there be such an individual then there is a beam in our eye and we cannot see clear enough to discern a mote or even a beam in our brother's eye.

It is a part of self-examination with reference to this particular case to enquire whether we are very much given to the acquisition of the world - whether its riches honors or pleasures engross our affections so much that mankind in general denominate us worldly minded men - men who oppose the poor and exhibit as much interest in worldly pursuits as the most irreligious man? If we find ourselves guilty of these worldly dispositions we may be certain that if we attack our brother on account of any crime even the vilest of sins the world will say to us *thou hypocrite first cast out the beam out of thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

We ought also faithfully to enquire of ourselves whether in censuring our brother we are not governed by some secret disposition to gratify our own prior or interest rather than subserve the glory of God. Do we not hope by our zeal against the sin of another to spend abroad an impression of our own superior sanctity or is there not some lurking enmity to our brother which seeks to be gratified.

It ought also to be enquired of ourselves whether we join in censuring another from a sense of duty or whether we may not be influenced to such a course by the opinion of others. The truth is in such a case the bible ought to be the grand directory to which we should resort for flight and direction: and to hear another opinion in the matter if so much consequence indicates a beam in our eye.

Before we take the place of censor we ought to enquire whether we have made allowances for the circumstances and conditions of our brother and granted to him the extent of that charity which the gospel inculcates. If we have not there is the beam of prejudice in our eye. And permit me here to remark that no thorn is more formidable than this - none that more obstructs and perverts the vision and none more apt to lie concealed. Indeed men are almost entirely governed by prejudices

imperceptible to themselves - and prejudices exist every where and at all times filling society with their poison and reducing an hundredfold the sun of human happiness.

Finally need I urge upon a Christian audience the indispensable importance of having a Spirit of prayer accompany self-examination. *Brethren if our hearts deceive us God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things.* Yes and he has promised to enlighten those who lack wisdom and the meek *will he guide in judgment the meek will he teach his way.* Continually and fervently therefore need we cry with David - *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy light O Lord my strength and my Redeemer.*

A second mode to which we should resort for ascertaining whether there be a beam in our own eye is to enquire concerning our feelings of our particular and faithful friends. What impropriety is there in one Christian solemnly and sincerely requesting another to let him know what fault or sin appears most prominent in his view and in the view of the world. The truth is our friend and others around us in very many instances discover our besetting sins and were they faithful to inform us how happy would it be! But Christians it is to be feared rarely make the request of their friends or they manifest an irritable disposition when their friends give them the hint. Their hints touch a sore and a tender spot. But if this be a very probable way of discovering the beam in our own eye why should we shrink from the pain of the disclosure? Why should we who believe the human heart ever at its best estate to be so corrupt and deceitful, doubt any thing that is bad even concerning ourselves? And why my Christian brethren should we be so unfaithful in telling one another our differences and besetting sins? It was not so in apostolic days.

Thirdly we may sometimes discover the beam that is in our own eye by enquiring what our enemies say of us. They will be very likely to strike their javelins at the weakest part of our characters. Instead therefore of exhibiting a testy irritableness when we hear what they say about us and cast it all back with scorn so entirely false it will be most wise to take their charges into deliberate consideration. It was an ancient proverb that every man stood in need of very faithful friends or bitter enemies. Were we to examine their charges with deep humility and prayer we should find them in general not altogether groundless and if we should upon the discovery be led to reformation instead of angering us our enemies would be of the greatest service to us and become the instruments of training us up for heaven.

The subject discussed in this desultory manner teaches us in the first place the source of the numberless uncharitable and severe censures and harsh judgments with which the world abounds. It springs from a diseased eye – an eye filled with a foreign object obstructing and distorting the vision. It is a fact that none are so inclined to censure others severely as those who are most deficient themselves. Where is the character of professing Christians most severely handled? Not among the moral and amiable in society: but in the barroom club - around the midnight bowl - in the circle of profane swearers - or over the gaming table. Indeed how directly in violation of the text is the conduct of any unregenerate man who passes his censures upon the professing Christian. The truth is there is a beam of no ordinary magnitude in the eyes of all such. They are guilty of the sin of neglecting to confess Christ before men and is not till this beam is rooted out that they are gratified to discern the mote or even the beam in the eye of Christians.

Secondly the subject shows us the reason why professing Christians are often so much disposed to wink

at the faults of their brethren which deserve censure. The fact is they perceive that they have a beam in their own eyes and they dare not touch the beam in their brother's eye lest their own be discovered. In other words the lives of professing Christians are frequently so far from what they ought to be that they dare not censure others because this would reproach themselves and compel them to lead better lives. And it is unquestionably true that the reproof of a man whose life is not exemplary and unimpeachable will have no effect except a bad one upon the vilest offender. He will immediately retort, *physician heal thyself. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

Finally then the subject shows us how important it is that we lead holy and unblamable lives. If we lead such lives we should not be disposed to censure others unreasonably nor to shrink from censuring the wicked when it becomes a duty. And if we lead such lives our reproof will enter the transgressor's bosom like a dagger nor can he turn beside the instrument from himself. He cannot perceive any beam in our eye that will induce him to suspect that our censures are severe and uncharitable. Let us then pluck out every beam from our eyes that is lodged there. Let us first purify ourselves and then we may hope to purify the church. Let our charity of this kind begin at home and we may hope that God will bless our efforts to the turning many souls from the error of their ways and thus they will prove the salvation of multitudes.

Delivered

At Conway May 1824



## Sermon 242 Exposition of the Fourth Chapter of Ephesians

[Sermon No. 242, Exposition of Ephesians Ch. 4, 1824 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 12]

The Epistle to the Ephesians may be regarded as a regular sermon. In the first chapters Paul lays down and establishes his doctrine which is the grand method of saving men by the sufferings and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the three last chapters he proceeds to make application of this doctrine to practice. And as the doctrinal part is remarkable for the elevation of style and rapturous glow of feeling in which it is written so the latter part is alike noticeable for the tenderness and love with which he urges upon the Ephesians the duties of their holy profession. And as I trust my brethren that you are already persuaded of the truth of the doctrines contained in this epistle that men are saved through the atonement of Christ according to the sovereign purpose of God by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost so I trust you will be prepared to listen to the apostles inferences from these important truths and apply them to your own conduct.

Verses 1 and 2.

*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

*Worthy of the vocation etc.* They had been called by grace to the possession of the privileges and hopes of the Sons of God. Yet it was all grace: therefore meekness and lowliness became them.

Verse 3.

*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

*Unity of the Spirit* - that unity which the Spirit of God teaches

Verse 4.

*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

*One body - one Spirit - one hope* - The church is but one body - the body of Christ - animated by the same Spirit - and all the members have the same hope the hope of heaven.

Verse 5.

*One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

*One Lord* - One Ruler, lawgiver and judge - even Jesus Christ.

*One faith* - One as to its Author, objects, nature and efficacy.

*One baptism* – viz. a baptism by water into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Verse 6.

*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

Rules over all

Pervades all things

Exists in Christians by his Spirit

All these things were indeed powerful motives to union

Verse 7.

*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

The Ephesians agreed in these great essentials. But they differed in some minor respects. Yet their different gifts were bestowed upon them not according to their merits but according to the sovereign appointment of God through Jesus Christ - and were therefore no cause for divisions and contentions.

Verse 8.

*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high,  
he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

This is from the 68<sup>th</sup> Psalm. He who is said by the Psalmist to have ascended on high is called by him Jehovah. But Paul applies this to Christ as a prediction of him therefore Christ is Jehovah.

Satan sin and death had held men in long and grievous captivity. But when Christ ascended he led these oppressors captive and received gifts most precious gifts to confer on men. An allusion is here made to the ancient triumphs of kings and generals among the heathen - also in the ascent of God from Sinai.

Verse 9.

*Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended  
first into the lower parts of the earth?*

Paul wishes to show also that the prophet in this passage had in mind also the previous humiliation and incarnation and descent into the grave of the Saviour before he ascended on high after his resurrection. Repeat the verse

*Lower parts of the earth* - Either the earth generally or the grave - probably the latter.

Verse 10.

*He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above  
all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

*Far above all heavens* – either the visible heavens - or above all the inhabitants of heaven principalities and powers being made subject to him.

This was done that he might fulfill all things relating to himself – fill his ministers apostles and disciples with all necessary gifts and graces and heaven and earth with his presence and his glory.

Verse 11.

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets;  
and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

And he appointed and glorified some to be apostles, etc.

*Apostles* - persons sent - the highest office in the church - What they taught was infallible - only twelve. The office expires when they die.

*Prophets* - those who foretold future events and gave an infallible explication of the sacred records - they continued only one or two centuries after Christ – when the power of working miracles ceased.

*Evangelists* - Their business was to go from place to place preaching the gospel under the direction of the apostle. They could work miracles during the first and second century. The office still continues.

*Pastors and teachers* - generally considered the same - their business was to perform the ordinary duties of the ministry in a particular place. If there were bishops in the modern sense of the term in apostolic

times is it not a little singular that Paul has passed them over unnoticed.

Verse 12.

*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry,  
for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

The object of these gifts was to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry that the body of Christ or the church might be edified.

Verse 13.

*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge  
of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the  
stature of the fulness of Christ:*

Till all believers were brought to that unity of faith or belief and that practical experimental knowledge of Christ which would render the whole body or church a perfect man complete in every part so as to reach the standard of Christ's fullness.

Verse 14.

*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried  
about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men,  
and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

The object of all this was to prevent our being whiled and tossed about as children by every wind of doctrine as a ship without a rudder - by the cunning arts and of subtle schemes of deceit of false teachers who lie in wait to deceive.

How strikingly does Paul here exhibit the state of a man who has no settled principles of religion!

And how strikingly too the modes of false teachers! They always keep the whole of their schemes out of sight. The word here used to signify their cunning craftiness is the same that is used in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of this epistle to signify the subtle contrivances of Satan to deceive and ruin men. *Here it is used, says Macknight, for a regular plan of deceit formed for upholding the common people in their ignorance and opposition to the gospel.*

Verse 15.

*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things,  
which is the head, even Christ:*

*Speaking the truth in love* - an exhortation to speak the truth plainly – but to speak it with an heart glowing with love to God and the souls of the hearers.

Versus 16.

*From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that  
which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the  
measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Parallel verse Colossians 2:19

*The meaning is that as human body is formed by the union of all the members to each other under the head and by the fitness of each member for its own office and place in the body so the church is formed by the union of its members under Christ the head. And as the human body increases till it arrives at maturity by the energy of every part in performing its proper function and by the sympathy of every part with the whole so the body of the church of Christ grows to maturity by the proper exercise of the gift and graces of individuals for the benefit of the whole. (Macknight)*

The length of this chapter forbids a profitable consideration of the whole at this time and as the 16<sup>th</sup> verse is the most convenient place for a pause I close with a few inferences from the verses that have been considered.

1. We are forcibly taught the oneness of the Church of Christ. It is here as in former chapters represented as constituting a single body with Christ for its head - or as the body of Christ itself: and no figure can more forcibly illustrate its oneness than this.

Christians are one in their experience. They all pass through essentially the same series of exercises and feelings in their conversion and sanctification although there may be shades of difference in an almost infinite variety among them. All are brought to see and confess themselves lost miserable depraved sinners. All see their need of a Saviour and acknowledge themselves to stand in perishing need of his atonement to reconcile them to God. All are made to feel the need of the special influences of the Spirit of God to prepare them for heaven. All feel sin to be an oppressive burden that clings to them and harasses them during their whole lives. So much alike indeed are the experiences of Christians in all ages and in every land that the feelings Paul expressed 2000 years ago even at this day tally precisely with those of Christians now and if the children of God meet from the very antipode they have only to disclose one another's feelings and they immediately know each other.

Again Christians agree in the essential articles of their belief. Probably no two persons coincide in every ramification of doctrine: but in the essentials of religion there is there can be no difference: for the

belief of these is absolutely necessary to conversion. We do sometimes see persons who regret some essential doctrines in so many words who nevertheless will assent to them if presented in another dress – yet to suppose a man to be a Christian who in every shape denies an essential doctrine of Christianity is to suppose a contradiction. It is idle to talk about two opposing systems of religious doctrine being consistent with Christian character and that it is safe to believe either of them. Two systems may differ in nonessentials: but when we come to the great essentials of the Gospel there is no such thing as two systems: there is but one Lord and one faith. If ours is not that one faith we certainly do not belong to the body of Christ. As if we halt between two opinions and cannot satisfy ourselves what is the system revealed in the bible we surely have not that one faith and consequently are destitute of religion. If the bible be so obscure that two men equally sincere and of equal abilities may derive from it two system of faith then it is certain that one part of the bible virtually if not actually contradicts another part. And if so the bible is of no sort of use since it affords no certain guide. Therefore we may be certain that there is one system of essential doctrines in the bible and that all Christians agree in these.

Christians also are one in their hopes and fears their joys and sorrows. Their exercises do indeed differ widely in the degrees in which they are experienced but they are essentially the same. They all have at heart some hope even if it be feeble of reaching the same eternal home at last - they fear their hope is not well founded they fear offending God and dishonoring their Redeemer and ruining their souls. They all have some degree of holy serenity and joy in God and in view of heavenly felicity and all without exception sorrow over their sins.

If then Christians are one in their experience – one in their faith and one in their hopes and fears joys and sorrows with what irresistible force does the apostle's exhortation to mutual forbearance and love come home upon all who profess to have drank into the Spirit of Christ. To hate one another is like one member of the body waging war against the other. It is indeed perfectly ridiculous for those whose feelings and sentiments and hopes and fears are essentially the same to be contending with one another or to cherish bitter feelings towards one another. There cannot be a more alarming proof of the want of religion than the want of brotherly love. Do you say that although you dare not say but your neighbor is a Christian yet he differs from you so much in some respects that you cannot receive him to your fellowship? What not receive him into your fellowship although you see in him the image of Christ! If he agrees with you upon the fundamentals religious doctrine - if you find the exercises of his heart to be similar to your own - if his hopes and fears joys and sorrows are similar to your own by what right do you close your bosom against him? Why instead of loving the image of God in him are you endeavouring to magnify the differences between you which you confess to not amount to essentials – and excluding him from your affections and thrusting him away from your communion? It is true indeed that if a man profess to be a Christian who denies the essential doctrines of the Gospel and who knows nothing of genuine Christian experience you are bound not to receive him as a Christian brother however high his pretensions. But if he do agree with you in the essentials and in Christian experience although he may dissent concerning the mint anise and cumin you violate the charity of the gospel and offend one of Christ's little ones if you do not receive him to your fellowship. It is this exclusive Spirit that has rent the church of Christ into so many sects feeling toward one another not the love of brethren but the bitterness of enemies. Let not us my brethren be guilty of this sin. Let us open our hearts and our communion board to all those who believe in the essential doctrines and manifest the marks of regeneration in their lives and feelings and we may hope for the reward promised by Christ when he says - Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the children of God.

Delivered  
At Conway May 1824

## Sermon 243 Comparison Between the Knowledge Derived from the scriptures and Human Literature and Science

[Sermon No. 243, "Comparison Between Knowledge Derived from the Scriptures and Human Literature and Science," Jeremiah 23:28, 1824 May, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 12]

Jeremiah 23:28

*What is the chaff to the wheat?*

*[This sermon includes a discussion of science vs. religion; also near the end the value of Sabbath school, youth bible classes.]*

The sacred writer makes this enquiry when comparing the prophet who was really taught of God and faithfully spoke the word of God with him who uttered for revelations the dreams and vain imaginations of his own heart. *The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord: and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.* The false prophet however put forth the strongest efforts of his ingenuity that he might seem to possess the wisdom that cometh from above. The text and context therefore forcibly represent to us insignificance and worthlessness of the most extensive human knowledge when compared with a knowledge of the word of God. They stand related to each other as the dream to the substance or as the chaff to the wheat.

It is my intention at this time to show how vastly more important is a knowledge of the word of God than of all the other arts and sciences.

I am not going however to depreciate human learning: for I highly respect it. But it ought to have its proper place that is very much below the knowledge of the word of God. I wish only to exalt the bible to its just and rightful supremacy over every human production. Some of the arguments that show that supremacy to be due to the scriptures I now shall attempt to present.

1. The knowledge derived from the scriptures is infallible and immutable. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God*, of the God who cannot lie. *For God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?* Every word of the sacred scriptures being written under the immediate inspiration of such a God must be eternal and unchangeable truth. Every fact related or every principle advanced in the bible is in perfect accordance with all other facts and principles. Perfectly known to God was everything there contained before his spirit dictated it to the holy men of old: so that no new discovery can ever alter or affect what the bible contains in the least. Discoveries in science may indeed throw new light on some parts of the bible and show us that we misapprehended its meaning: but they touch not the scriptures themselves. The defect lies in such a case in our understanding or our hearts and not in the bible. And from the same cause it results that different denominations derive from the bible so very different meanings. The difficulty lies not in the volume read but in the jaundiced or the blinded eye that reads it. Whatever we find clearly revealed in the word of God we may rest ourselves upon with unshaken

confidence. Sophistry cannot tear it from its firm foundations: the storms of adversity may war around it but it is moored to the throne of God and will remain unchanged and unchangeable amid the final dissolution of the universe.

But very different from this is mere human knowledge. I except here the pure mathematics which carry with them resistless demonstration. But enter the wide fields of natural moral and intellectual philosophy the three most important sources of knowledge merely human and you will find as many changes in the principles and reasonings as there have been annual suns since the sciences were cultivated. One man builds a new system upon the ruins of those have gone before him: his successor now models this or entirely overturns it and thus a consistent change going on in the various departments of knowledge gradually advancing towards perfection indeed but in no instance has any science yet reached that point. Even the fundamental principles of many sciences have frequently been overturned and new ones substituted: and in some departments of knowledge there are as many opposing systems upon the same branch as there are ingenious authors who have written upon it. To select a striking instance of this character I need only refer to English grammar - a subject that has assumed almost every possible shape.

From the fluctuations and uncertainty that appear in human science the mind turns with satisfaction to the pages of inspiration whence beams a steady and perpetual light. A man may ransack all the libraries under heaven and digest all their contents and yet after all the only work among the hundreds of thousands now in existence on which he can lay his hands and pronounce it to be unmixed and eternal truth and an infallible guide is the bible. I have read a multitude of books said once a learned man but there is not one I dare trust my soul upon but the holy scriptures. Wearied with the wrangling of the schoolmen and the contests of philosophers the mind settles down upon this rock with as glad and joyful a feeling as the sailor experiences when thrown by the waves upon the cliff that secures him from their fury.

Secondly ordinary knowledge instructs us only concerning things temporal but the bible concerning things eternal.

We cannot indeed say but some of the principles of science especially those of mathematics exist independant of the present order of the universe and will remain alike true when that order shall be interrupted. Nay there is some reason for believing that the universe is but a transcript of the Divine character and therefore that the present order of things and its grand outlines will remain eternally the same. But it is nevertheless true that science almost without exception is applied by man only to the things that will erelong perish. The loftiest flights of unassisted knowledge have only afforded to the philosopher a faint and uncertain glimpse of futurity. The grave seems to be the grand limit of human enquiry. All beyond is but a floating vision with clouds and darkness resting upon it. The brightest genius the man of most extensive knowledge when his mind has grasped almost the circle of the sciences and the arts as he approaches the close of life is made melancholy by the thought that all his attainments cannot support him in the hour of death and that they must all erelong be lost and forgotten in the obliviousness of the grave. The laurels he strove so hard to win will soon fall from his brow like the leaves of autumn.

But turn now to the blessed pages of the bible: and at once we find this earth with all its bustle and knowledge and pleasures dwindling into a point and its whole duration seeming but a moment while the splendors and glories of eternity open upon the astonished soul. Our thoughts are directed at once either over that world where a never ending round of gloomy fiery horrors reign over the undying



inhabitants of perdition or to that world where a flood of light and love and glory pours in upon the souls of the blessed in endless succession and God and the Lamb display their uncreated radiance forever.

We learn on every page of the bible that this busy scene of things we are now engaged in - this theater to which science is limited - this is but the beginning of existence and the mere stepstone of eternity the dark and short passage to a world of endless glory or misery. Let human science then talk of penetrating innumerable leagues among the stars and reckon of the host of heaven and let the astronomer labour to express an idea so mighty. What is all this compared with the idea of eternity which the bible discloses. What this to the thought which traces the soul through the ever revolving periods of heavenly bliss or infernal woe! In this view of the subject who does not feel the unspeakably more interesting knowledge which the bible presents us about the proudest reach of science! Surely the prophet's indignant enquiry becomes us here - *What is the chaff to the wheat?*

Thirdly a knowledge of the arts and sciences ministers to our welfare only in this life but a knowledge of the bible instructs us how to obtain eternal happiness.

I feel myself to be a dying man whose earthly prospects and hopes and enjoyments are at an end. I go to the distinguished votary of reason whose name has gone forth all over the world shouted by the trumpet of fame as the most learned and wisest of men. I ask him to show me whether I shall live in another world: and if so how can I secure the favour of God have my sins forgiven and my heart prepared for glory beyond the grave. Alas he can advance only a step beyond conjecture in answering these most interesting of all enquiries. I have seen the blind worm crawled to the top of a spear of grass and stretch his body as far as possible in every direction to find something beyond on which he might rest but striving in vain and obliged again to descend to the earth from which it ascended. In the same manner does philosophy search forth to the future but she finds nothing on which she can rest: all is dark and all is conjecture. And when death compels the philosopher to enter eternity he plunges he knows not where - whether into annihilation or a new being - whether into heaven or hell - he can only conjecture. Sunk therefore with doubts and fears I leave the philosopher with a despairing heart lamenting the limited range of human learning and sighing for a resting place for my soul. The philosopher's servant is my guide. Seeing him apparently cheerful and happy I enquire the grounds of his happiness - for since his is a station so low in life it would seem he must be sorrowful. He replies I am contented and happy because I indulge a humble hope through the mercy of God in a Redeemer the crown of eternal glory awaits me at last in another world. His words operate like a magic charm in rousing my soul. He gives me the bible. I open it and then my heart is depicted to the very life - and my sins are analyzed in crimson colours. I read too *behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life.* My heart leaps at the wonderful discovery and I exclaim, *Lord I believe help thou mine unbelief.* I join with angels in admiring the mystery of Christ crucified. I now see what philosophy could not tell me how *God can be just while he justifies the believer in Jesus: whom having not seen I love in whom though now I have seen him not yet believing. I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* The pains of sickness are almost forgotten amid the hopes and joys that flow in upon my soul from the bible. I clasp this to my bosom and see my life giving way and the king of terrors approaching unalarmed. I see his arm uplifted to give the deadly blow. I stand on the banks of Jordan just ready to plunge into its waves. A momentary pang and the bitterness of death is past. The sting of death is removed and my glorious Redeemer sustains me triumphantly in the final struggle. In a moment the glories of heaven break on my raptured and soul and I stand on Mount Zion above with the hundred and forty and four thousand singing the everlasting song of Moses and the Lamb and while I

forever adore the riches of that grace that plucked me as a brand out of the burning never can I forget that sacred volume which conveyed to me the tidings of that grace and taught me what mere human learning cannot teach how to prepare for eternal felicity.

Similar to this has been the experience of multitudes in every age. The most unlettered peasant has learned more real wisdom from the bible in a single day than the most learned philosopher has attained during the whole life of study. Hence it is that we often perceive the wisdom of the latter to be fallacy and the supposed ignorance of the former to be heavenly wisdom. The former by all his researches has not learned how to die - the latter by reading the simple word of God has learned the worth of Jesus Christ and him crucified and therefore learnt how to attain an undecaying crown.

I am not here attempting to depreciate the value of human learning. I speak of it as separated entirely from revelation. Whenever these are united the beauty of the character is indeed greatly enhanced and there can be no more glorious title than that of a learned pious man but when disunited and brought into comparison certainly we may just exclaim, *What is the chaff to the wheat?*

I have touched my hearers only upon a few striking points in the parallel between mere human learning and the knowledge of the bible. But I have touched enough I trust to show us first the folly of neglecting any opportunity in our power for understanding the scriptures. Yet how very common this neglect! Now will almost any work of mere human production draw off our attentions from the bible! Thousands will devote their days and nights to the acquisition of human knowledge and wear out their constitutions and bring on premature old age disease and death merely to obtain the name of good scholars while perhaps the scriptures lie unread on the shelves of their libraries. Even the child who puts forth every energy to be foremost in the common school takes up his testament to learn its contents with a heavy heart. And among those who have reached maturity the biography or the history the romance of the play or the poem often almost entirely supplant the word of God. Few are the parents who will not be earnest to place their children in schools for acquiring human learning and they are often willing to make great and painful sacrifices of prosperity to send abroad to the academy or college their sons while perhaps they will not even be at the pains of recommending to the children an attendance upon the sabbath school whose special object is to instruct them in the holy scriptures. Nay while every voice is raised in praise of common education there are multitudes who feel and express an hostility to sabbath school instruction. An angel unacquainted with our race would not believe this possible: but the sabbath school instructor must believe it and feel its damping influence too.

Secondly the subject shows us the wisdom and prudence of those who are diligent and persevering in the study of the holy scriptures. That study has often very often proved the grand instrument of preparing thousands of souls for heaven. And I appeal to the children and youth in this place who in past seasons have attended sabbath school instruction whether they have ever regretted being too paranelical and diligent in their efforts. I appeal to those children and youth who have neglected the opportunity presented them whether conscience has not sometimes stung them for their neglect - whether they have not been sensible that they were doing wrong in the omission - and whether they have not sometimes feared that by their omission they were ruining their souls. But my young friends an opportunity is now once more presented you - and let me tell you it may be your last - in which to learn the most desirable of all knowledge. On the next sabbath the school kept during the summer in this house of God will be commenced by the leave of Providence - the valuable library with some recent additions will again be opened to our youth and competent instructors will cheerfully engage again in this labour of love. The whole however is only a free offering and if parents will not receive it for their children or if the children refuse they can easily do so. But they can not so easily avoid the fatal perhaps

he eternally fatal consequences of such neglect.

To the youth in this place of both sexes above that the age of twelve I also propose the establishment of a bible class the present season. You probably are somewhat acquainted with these and therefore I need not be very particular in description. It is a class of the young associated for the purpose of acquiring the knowledge of the holy scriptures - not the sectarian peculiarities of the unadulterated word of God. The bible therefore or the biblical catechism which is merely a help for understanding the bible is employed in such classes. The minister is the sole instructor and expounder: for the meeting of a bible class amounts to little more than a familiar lecture on the scripture. The questions usually asked are few and where a class is large the scholar would not probably be interrogated more than once a month. It is usual for such classes to meet on a weekday instead of the sabbath in this concourse and I must follow being unable to engage in any public duties additional to the stated services of that day. I propose to hold these meetings only once in a fortnight at such hours as are convenient and if any of our youth are disposed to avail themselves of this opportunity they are requested to tarry after the morning service on the next Lord's day when I will explain more particularly the plan by which I shall be governed. I wish however to be distinctly understood that unless a respectable number should come forward to undertake in this course of biblical instruction I shall not feel it my duty to engage in the undertaking since the additional labour cannot be less than the preparation of an additional third sermon each fortnight. May God direct us all in the path of duty and the accompany all our efforts to understand his word by the energies of his Spirit without which it will be to us a sealed book and a savour of death unto death.

Delivered

At Conway May 1824

## Sermon 248 Persuasives to Early Piety

[Sermon No. 248, "Persuasives to Early Piety," Proverbs 8:17, 1824 Oct, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 12]

Proverbs 8:17

*I love them that love me and those that seek me early shall find me.*

*[This sermon is a plea to young people to repent and accept Christ; the recent death of a young church member should be an incentive. In one place he says he will not regale them with the threatenings, but then he does just that!]*

The recent removal of a youth into eternity in this place renders this a proper occasion to apply the providence to the rising generation among us and to call on them to prepare to meet God in judgment. The event indeed is powerfully calculated to bring to a pause men of every age and to lead them what they have done and what they are doing for another world - particularly those connected with the departed youth by the ties of relationship and whose bright hopes have sunk with a son and a brother into the grave have reason to enquire wherefore it is that the Lord thus contends with them and what he would have them to do. There is a merciful intention on the part of God in thus severely putting their faith to the trial and shrouding them so suddenly in deep darkness - some good to them is intended - some object to be effected of greater importance than the life of the deceased child or God had not taken him away. It is the business of surviving relatives to see to it that they do not by their misimprovement frustrate so far as their own good is concerned these kind intentions of him who in faithfulness has afflicted them. Their trial is indeed severe - the sword of affliction has entered deep and rendered many a tie which seemed wound round the innermost core of the heart - yet it was wielded by a kind hand which gave no heavier blow than infinite wisdom saw best and perfect benevolence permitted. And the same hand that inflicted the wound can close it again and administer the balm that is in Gilead. Oh, let them not attempt the cure by any earthly remedies which at best but heal the wound slightly! Let them refuse the prescriptions of every physician but of him who is mighty to save and who came into the world especially to *comfort them that mourn to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion - to give unto them beauty for ashes - the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

But it is in the hope that the providence to which I have referred may lend additional weight to my words that I have chosen for a text a glorious promise of God to the young - that *if they seek him early they shall find him.* The volatility of youth the ardour of their passions and their fancied security against the approach of death render them almost inaccessible to the warning voice of wisdom which bids them forsake the vanities of this world and secure the eternal realities of another state. The most tender and solemn and earnest exhortations from the pulpit and from private christians often excite the ridicule and contempt of the young and bolstering up one another in opposition to religion they go on hardening in sin until the Spirit of God abandons them to ruin and there is no place for repentance though they seek it earnestly with tears. But one of their number is missing today he is gone into eternity - he moulders beneath the clods of the Valley. The thought of his departure spreads over the countenances of the youth who hear me today so much of solemnity that I feel as if their hearts were more than

usually prepared to listen to religious truth. Nay I will believe my young friends that in view of this alarming death of one of your number you feel a degree of anxious concern lest you are not prepared to follow him to the judgment seat of Christ. It is my wish to cherish those feelings until you are led to a real preparation for another world. And to effect this (but to overcome this) I am not going to bring before you in terrible array the threatenings of God against all who are unreconciled to him. If you have never repented of your sins I might indeed point out to you your danger in such a light as without the least exaggeration would make you shudder. I might tell you that while you remain in a state of impenitence you are condemned by the law of God and exposed every hour and every moment to the wrath of an insulted God. I might tell you that God is angry with you every day and except you repent you will sink forever into a lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are to be tormented day and night forever and ever. And all this would be most solemnly true. But I choose rather to represent to you the readiness of God to receive you to his favour and to lay before you the reasons that ought to induce you to give your hearts to God in the morning of life. I would win your hearts to the service of God by an exhibition of his kindness – of his special kindness to you. And if this does not melt your hearts into a returning love to Him – ah - they must be cold as the ice of the poles and hard as the rocks of our mountains.

In the text you have the kind promise of God that *if you seek him early you shall find him*. There have been many who have sought him in more advanced years - with earnest importunity who alas were not able to find him because their day of grace – their accepted time was past. Oh how much would they have given for such a promise as is made to you! But have you ever sought God? What is it to seek him in the sense in which the term is used in the text? This is a highly important enquiry: for if you seek God not in the right way you cannot find him - I shall therefore devote the first part of this discourse to furnish an answer to this enquiry.

First the youth who would find God - that is be restored to his favour which every one of us has lost - must seek him with godly sincerity. Many seek God when they find themselves in danger of suffering his wrath - when death or danger stares them in the face - and no doubt they are sincerely desirous of being delivered from punishment but if nothing but fear urges them to cry for mercy they have no sincere basis to be made like God - to be made holy - to abandon their inordinate attachment to the world and live by faith on the Son of God. Others are sincerely desirous of finding a God who will not be over strict in his requirements and will not compel them to crucify their lusts and unholy affections – a God in short all mercy but without the attribute of justice. But these persons have no real desire to find the pure and holy God of the bible. We must sincerely desire to be made holy - to be renewed in the temple of our minds and have our wills brought into subordination to the will of God or we have no right to appropriate to ourselves the promise of the text. In order to turn your thoughts inward upon your own exercises I ask of you my young friends whether you have ever felt such desires as these - or have you merely desired happiness and deliverance from misery?

Secondly if you would find God you must seek him by a diligent use of the means of grace which he has appointed. Tell me not that you sincerely desire to attain to the favour of God and yet do not go to the house of God as regularly as providence permits to worship with his people. Tell not of your desires after God if you neglect to read his word and do not make it the guide of your life. Say not that you are seeking God if you do not go often into your closet and pray to him for mercy and pardon and grace. Imagine not that you are really striving to enter in at the strait gate while you neglect the society of the children of God and the social conference and prayer meeting. Fancy not that you desire to be holy while you continue to indulge yourselves in the unlawful pleasures and trifling vanities of the world. If you are really sincere un seeking after God you can no more neglect an improvement of all the means of

grace God has appointed than the hungry man can neglect to seek after food.

Thirdly if you would find God you must seek him with a willingness to make any sacrifice and to take up any cross he may require of you. *He that loveth the father or mother more than me, says Christ, is not worthy of me and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.* There are enough who would be carried to heaven on the soft coach of indulgence but *we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven.* God demands of those who would be interested in his favour that they be ready to sacrifice all their worldly comforts and if necessary their lives for his cause. Above all they must sacrifice their pride - they must overcome their fear of an ungodly world - they must be willing to have their names cast out as evil and be regarded as the filth and offscouring of the world. Let no one fancy that he is truly seeking religion who does not possess such a self-denying spirit as this. Multitudes seek God month after month with strong crying and tears but being destitute of the spirit - being unwilling to sacrifice every idol they do not find God and never can find him till they are ready to take up the cross.

Fourthly if you would seek God aright you must seek him through Christ. For *there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby you can be saved - and no man cometh to the Father but by him* - that is no one cometh acceptably but through him. But in order to approach God through this Saviour you must feel your need of him and you will never feel you need of him unless you are sensible of your lost and wretched condition by nature. You must first see the plague of your own hearts or you will not feel that you cannot save yourself and that just such a Saviour is needed as God has provided. In the name of Christ therefore must you approach God relying entirely on his righteousness to save you or God will remain deaf to your loudest cries.

Finally if you would find God you must seek him perseveringly. This is the rock on which thousands have made shipwreck of their souls. With deep anxiety they have for a time cried to the Lord for mercy: but God has not heard their prayers because their hearts were unhumbled and fancying that they have done all in their power to attain to his favour they have given over their anxiety and gone back into the world. But had they been led by their failure to experience the grace of God in renewing their hearts had this fact led them as it ought to have done to charge the fault charge the fault on themselves and to feel that the reason God did not hear them was because they did not ask aright the effect would have been to lead them to humble themselves more deeply and cry more earnestly for mercy and regenerating grace. Oh what a wretched spectacle does that youth present who sets out zealously in the road to heaven and yet in a few months or years turns about and pursues the crooked course to destruction. How contemptible does this character appear in the eyes of men and of devils! How pitiable an object in the eye of christians and of angels!

Such is the manner in which the young must seek God if they hope to attain to his favour. Seeking him in such a manner they may appropriate to themselves the promise in the text. Permit me now my youthful hearers to suggest to you some special reasons that urge you thus to seek God in the morning of your days.

I might pass upon your attention the infinite importance of religion above everything the world can afford. I might show you that you can have no real happiness without it. I might hold before you the glorious prize those obtain in heaven who share in the favour of God. Or on the other hand I might uncover before you in all their horror the dark and dreadful abodes of perdition and bid you see how terribly the wrath of God falls upon the inmates of that eternal dungeon where the single ray of hope never enters. But I choose rather to direct your attention to certain special reasons why the young

should obtain religion which will not apply to those of more advanced age.

And first you who are young are more free from worldly cares and perplexities than you will be should you live to see mature years. Those who are now in the midst of life will tell you that these cares - the various pursuits of life - and their attendant difficulties and engross the attention to a degree of which you can now form no idea. They leave but very little time to attend especially to religion: and religion demands a large share of time and attention if we would secure an interest in the favour of God. He is not to be put off with the shreds and patches of our time. He will have as he deserves the first regard or he will have none. Now while comparatively disengaged from the trials and engrossments and perplexities of active life you have leisure to secure that good part which never can be taken from you. But delay the work till you are carried forward into the vortex of business - till the farm or the merchandise or the profession engross your minds and small very small is the probability you will ever so far overcome the difficulties that surround you as to attend to the concerns of your souls. How few of those who have suffered the precious moments of youth to pass without religion have ever afterwards attained this pearl of great price! And think not that you shall be more fortunate than those of gone before you.

These considerations gather strength when I remark in the second place that your religious sensibilities are stronger in youth than at any subsequent period. I remark this as a general fact although there are doubtless exceptions. But intercourse with the world acquaintance with the world almost infallibly does deaden the susceptibilities of our nature. The truths of religion now make a degree of impression on your hearts: but depend upon it unless the special grace of God intervene they will make less and less impression on you so long as you live. You may remember the times perhaps when a particular view of religion affected you deeply. Now I ask has not every subsequent view of the subject affected you less and less? If then you resist the impressions religion makes on you while young will you be likely to yield to them in more advanced years when they are lightened and your hearts are clearly affected at all? Can you will you rely on the almost desperate hope on the bare possibility that some how or other you shall be more deeply excited to attend to your soul at a future period? The very inmates of Bedlam calculate better than this

I remark thirdly as another peculiar reason for youth to seek God early that their prejudices against religion are less strong in the beginning of life than they will be if you grow up to manhood impenitent. These prejudices are strong enough in all our hearts as soon as we are made acquainted with the true nature of religion: but they grow with the growth and strengthen with the strength. Our hearts are a fruitful soil and if the plants of religion be not growing there depend upon it Satan will cultivate there an abundant crop of tears. You feel perhaps while young some doubt concerning the truth of a part of the doctrines taught in the bible - at any rate you do not love them. Now if you remain unconverted you may rest assured that ere long your doubts will rise to a decided disbelief of these truths and to a strong disgust toward them. For these doctrines are opposed to the wickedness of your heart and life and the longer you continue in sin the more opposed are they to you and of your goes down and of course the more you will hate them. But it is only the truth I can make men free from sin and when they disbelieve and oppose the truth - so long will they remain the servants of sin. Let the young then seize the present precious moment to crush these prejudices against the truth before they become twisted around every fibre of their heart and the very life blood of the soul is poisoned.

Fourthly another powerful reason why the young should seek God is that habits of sin are not at that age so deeply fixed. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye who are accustomed to do evil learn to do well.* Here we learn in impressive language the nature of habit. By a

strong figure it is represented almost as difficult to overcome as to alter the course of nature: and sinful habits are stronger than any other because they are most agreeable to our natures. But let every youth in this assembly remember that if he is impenitent his habits of sin are every day acquiring strength and every day becoming more difficult to break. It is as if a man were winding a chain around you and every day should make an additional coil. Millions ere they were aware of it have had the chains of sin twisted and riveted about them by the force of habit that it was no more possible for them in a moral sense to get free than for the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots. I urge you my young friends to rise Sampson like and break your fetters before you are fastened down in them forever.

Fifthly it is another urgent reason to induce the young to seek religion that facts show that special influences of God's Spirit are more abundantly and more frequently poured out upon the youth than upon those in more advanced life. The history of the church shows this to be the fact. When a special revival of religion exists in any place who are the persons that are the subjects of it in the greatest numbers? In most cases of this kind nine out of ten are youth persons between the age of ten and twenty - while it is regarded as almost a miraculous display of grace if one of middle or advanced age is converted. And when no special revival exists who are the persons most frequently brought into the church? The records of almost every church in Christendom will show that it is the young. Now this cannot result from there being but a few of the middle-aged and of the aged who are destitute of religion: for in nearly every place the great majority of such persons if enquired of will say that they have never experienced that new birth Christ describes in his conversation with Nicodemus. It must proceed from the fact that God bestows his grace more copiously upon the young than upon others. And why should he continue forever to strive with those who have once and again resisted his spirit and trampled underfoot the blood of his Son? Beware my youthful hearers of becoming of that number at last. You have peculiar encouragement now to seek religion because you enjoy a more powerful influence from the Spirit of God and those more advanced in life. But remember how dreadful will be your condemnation if you resist that greater influence and reject the offers of mercy. O how agonizing will be your reflections when that Spirit has abandoned you and sin has bound you in fetters too strong to be broken by any created strength!

Finally need I urge upon the young the uncertainty of life as a reason for seeking the Lord early in life? Has not the providence of God urged this upon them in the instance of mortality to which I have already referred - and if they will not take warning when God thus speaks to them - when the fresh grave of one of their number speaks to them they will turn a deaf ear to my voice. But they will hear and feel too when sickness assails them and death stands over them with his glittering sword. They will see and hear and find that all which I now tell them is true when they see the very mouth of hell opening before them and death stands ready to push them into it.

And now my youthful hearers in view of so many peculiar and overwhelming arguments to induce you now to make your peace with God and to break off your habits of sin - can you - can one of you persist in a course of rebellion and irreligion? Suppose that death spares you to grow up to manhood yet amid a multiplicity of cares how will you find time to attend to religion - beset with a host of prejudices against religion how can you yield your hearts to the influence of the Gospel - with blunted sensibilities with strong rooted habits of sin and abandoned by the Spirit of God how can you hope to secure that good part which shall never be taken from you! Ah my young friends pass the age of twenty - no I will say from the age of five and twenty without religion and I do not say but God may convert you - for he has converted numbers older than that - but the faint and almost desperate is the hope that you will ever prepare for eternity. Every reason have I to fear that your dislike to religion will rise stronger and stronger and your disposition to attend to it weary and weaken until death comes in and closes the



scene and you rush into the presence of your Judge unprepared to hear your awful and unchangeable doom.

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*[The following was inserted as page 7 of the scanned images; it appears to be unrelated to the sermon.]*

...despair - I knew I was in the hand of a justly offended God from whom I expected no mercy and could ask none. With these feelings I am now about to be turned I am now about to enter the eternal world. To you my children I can only say profit by my example - quench not the spirit - seek religion now if you would avoid a miserable eternity. Put not off the concerns of your souls till the sentence died upon his lips; his strength which had been all summoned to make this last effort suddenly failed, he fell back on his bed and with a groan that seemed to speak the pains of another world the immortal Spirit took to flight from the body which it had inhabited nearly four score years to receive according to its works.

Delivered

At Conway October 1824

At Conway June 1829

At Amherst North Parish December 1832

At Amherst West Parish February 1833

At Deerfield July 1836

At Amherst East Parish March 1837

At Leverett July 1837

## Sermon 249 Denying Christ

[Sermon No. 249, "Denying Christ," Matthew 10:33, 1824 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 12]

Matthew 10:33

*But whosoever shall deny me before men  
him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

Our hearts are so unaffected with eternal glories that we need something more than cheering promises of future good to strengthen us to the conflict with our spiritual enemies to make us faithful to the cause of our Master in the midst of a world that lieth in wickedness. The Saviour well knew this and therefore he bid his fainting disciples not only remember that they should be acknowledged before God as a reward of their faithfulness to him on earth but he added also the fearful denunciation in the text against apostasy thus presenting before them a double motive to faithfulness. This same denunciation is still in force and surely if those who in the face of the most appalling dangers that hedged up the path of the primitive disciples so that every step of the course they trod as it were on scorpions if such for the punishment of their apostasy will be publicly proclaimed and branded as traitors at the day of judgment a doom no less fearful awaits those who at this day of comparative security abandon their Master and his cause. We almost cease to wonder that many at that day when confronted with fire and faggots and wild beasts ready to devour them should have found their faith and resolution abandoning them and their tongues denying their Saviour. But how shall we account for it that any in these days in Christian lands where the worship of God is perfectly free should renounce the faith of the Gospels and join his enemies in buffeting the Saviour. Alas my hearers the wickedness of the human heart will account for anything that is bad. It is a fact written on almost every page of ecclesiastical history that pure and undefiled religion has flourished best when the powers of this world were opposed to it and even persecuted the disciples of Christ with fire and sword. The truth is the human heart cannot bear prosperity - Christians need the lash of adversity to prompt them to their posts. It is then in the prosperous days of the church that instances are most numerous in which professed believers have denied their master: and it is then that we who profess the religion of the Gospel are most in danger of apostasy. The text then was not confined to the apostolic times. It had a fearful application in those dark centuries when the man of sin stretched his iron sceptre over the church and the whole world wondered after the beast. And in these days of spiritual prosperity it has an application: for as I said before it is in the period when the church is most prosperous that Christ is most frequently denied.

In meditating upon the text the first enquiry that suggests itself is what is that that constitutes a denial of Christ?

Every sin of which we are guilty is in fact a denial of the authority of Christ. But although Christ commands yet knowing what is in man he does not expect perfect sinless obedience in his disciples and therefore he does not regard every sin if repented of as a denial of him. It is only when we formally or implicitly disavow his cause and our relation to him and act accordingly that we are regarded as denying him. Peter declared that he never knew Christ and he acted accordingly - that is he began to curse and to swear. Yet Peter repented of this gross denial of his Saviour and was forgiven and hence we learn that

every individual act of denial does not place a person beyond the reach of mercy and salvation. How far a person may proceed in a course of conduct that constitutes a denial of Christ before he reaches that point where there is no place for repentance or pardon is impossible for us to say - *God knoweth*. The denial spoken of in the text supposes that the offender has passed this point: for it represents Christ as denying him admittance to heaven. In other words it supposes the person to have persevered in a denial of his Lord and Master. I offer then as a definition on this subject that a denial of Christ in the sense of the text consists either in a persevering rejection of the truths of the Gospel after they have been once embraced accompanied by a neglect of the peculiar duties of the believer - or it consists in a practical renunciation of Christ by neglecting a compliance with his commandments after they have been once entered upon; although the doctrines of the Gospel may still be nominally maintained. Of the first kind of denial Paul speaks when he says to the Galatians - *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel*. And John also speaks of the same when he says, *They went out from us but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son*. In Revelation he says, *I know thy works and where thou dwellest even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth*. Peter also describes this kind of denial when he says, *But there were false prophets also among the people even as there shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction*. Jude also describes the same thing when he says, *for there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ* - or as the true translation would make it, *denying our only Master God and Lord Jesus Christ*.

Of the second kind of denial of Christ included in the definition I have just given Paul speaks when he refers to those who having *a form of godliness deny the power thereof*. Also when he says, *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*: and also more explicitly when he says, *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him being abominable and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate*.

If there be any of us my brethren who have denied Christ in either of these senses it is not with the view of addressing them that I am discoursing from the text. For of what use will it be to call on those to return who are irreconcilably abandoned to ruin? Christ in the text did not address such but he intended it as a caution to those of his disciples who had not yet abandoned him. And in the spirit of the text I wish to address *him that thinketh he standeth to take heed lest he fall*. Devoted Christians like Peter may be betrayed into a momentary denial of their Master: but a persevering continued denial does not proceed from a violent temptation at first. The christian is gradually led into it; and in the incipient stages of his apostasy he is not aware of his declension. And in this circumstance lies his peculiar danger - Nay a man may habitually deny Christ for many years and yet have no suspicion of it. But there are symptoms of this as well as of every other moral and natural disease: and I trust I shall gain your attention while as a second division of my discourse I endeavour to point out what the most obvious of these symptoms are.

The general principle by which we ascertain that our moral natures are diseased is the same as that by which a diseased body is indicated. It is the principle of comparison. The man who had never enjoyed a moments health nor had seen any one else in health could never ascertain that he was diseased. Because he would have no standard of comparison by which to judge. He could not tell but he was in

the enjoyment of as good health as his constitution permitted. And so the man who has never enjoyed any spiritual health even in if he has seen others possessing it can form but a wretched judgment concerning the maladies of his moral constitution. But every real Christian has been in the course of his experience in possession of a degree of spiritual health: and as the man with a diseased body is able by comparing his present feelings with those of his healthy days is able to determine that he is sick: so the christian by comparing his present and past exercise can determine whether any spirituality malady has attacked him.

To pursue this illustration a little farther. When the physician visits you in sickness one of his first enquiries is concerning the state of your appetite. I make the same enquiry in regard to your moral appetite. For by the state of this it can be determined with a good degree of certainty whether you are attacked with that consumptive disease - apostasy.

You once had a strong relish for the broken body and the flowing blood of Christ and his communion table. You there found meat to eat which the world knew not of. You anticipated the approach of the sacramental occasion with lively satisfaction. If possible you joined your brethren at the meeting which is observed preparatory to the ordinance and you often lifted up your hearts to God that he would give you a proper frame of mind for the communion. You examined your hearts with faithfulness crying to *God to search you and try you and see if there was any wicked way in you and to lead you in the way everlasting*. But my brethren if any of us have come to (shall approach) the table of our Master today (in the coming sabbath) without any of this previous preparation it must be because we have no great relish for the ordinance. Our appetite for it has failed and this is one symptom of that apostasy which precedes a denial of Christ.

I enquire too concerning your relish for the sabbath. The feelings of David on this point exhibit the state of a soul in health. *How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord of hosts! A day spent in thy courts is better than a thousand*. The christian looks upon the sabbath as a foretaste of heaven. He has an appetite (relish) for its duties which mainly consist in prayer praise and about devout meditation and reading the scriptures. We can doubtless also recollect some sabbaths when some portion of the feeling of David was ours. Do you say that you now have little or no relish for the sabbath except that it affords you a season of rest from the ordinary labours of the week (and enables you to see your friends and companions). Then be assured that you have another symptom of apostasy upon you.

I ask again what is the state of your appetite in regard to the bible. Here again the experience of David will show us what is the state of a person in spiritual health. *O how I love thy law - it is my meditation all the day. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word - more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb*. You once knew something of the preciousness of the scriptures here expressed - does the favour of it continue. If not write down against yourself a third symptom of apostasy.

Again I enquire what relish have you at present for the duty of prayer? Here is an almost infallible symptom of a healthy or a diseased soul. If prayer continue to be practised by you as regularly and as fervently as in the best days of your experience - if you feel deeply your need of it through slothfulness or business you at any time neglect the stated season for performing the duty and that neglect fills you with self-reproaches and leads you to reformation there is there strong reason to believe that you are growing in grace and possess a soul in health and prosperity. But does the conscience of anyone who hears me testify that prayer has become a burden to him - so much so that he almost neglects the duty - rarely going into his closet to hold communion with God - the place where he used daily to resort - let

me solemnly warn that his soul is in imminent danger I must tell him whether he listens or not that his soul is dreadfully disordered. He has taken an alarming stride backward in the path of apostacy. It will not be long - it will not be long - before he will have denied the Lord that bought him and bring on himself swift destruction unless he repents and reforms and makes himself again familiar with his closet.

The man who lives in the exercise of religion has a relish for christian intercourse. He is not displeased to have his brethren put to him the most searching enquiries concerning the grounds of his hope and the present state of his heart. If he is building on a false foundation he hopes these enquiries will be the means of undeceiving him - and if he has been guilty of any conduct unbecoming the christian character he wishes to have his brethren tell him of it and will be rather thankful than irritated by their faithful reproofs. He feels his need too of uniting as frequently as other duties will permit in social prayer and praise with his brethren and when he neglects the prayer meeting and the conference he finds that he neglects his closet and other duties.

But the christian who has begun to apostatize finds a different state of feeling in his bosom. He is afraid of the enquiries of his brethren concerning the state of his heart and fears their reproofs because he feels guilty. The consequence is that he avoids christian society for which he has little or no relish. He avoids too the place where prayer is wont to be made both because he has a disrelish for the services and fears his conscience will there be disturbed; although he makes himself believe that he does not so often frequent these meetings as formerly because he does not profit by them. Ah, my brethren, these are alarming symptoms that show the man almost ready to deny his Master.

And here I remark further that it shows the disease has taken a firm hold if in addition to the symptoms last pointed out a man finds himself more interested in worldly things in proportion as his relish for christian intercourse decreases. If he finds the riches splendors and honors of the world to assume a more lovely aspect - if he is more deeply engaged in pursuit of them - if he is more agitated and distressed by disappointment in pursuit of them. Oh how plainly to all but himself do these things show the man to be returning like the sow that was washed to his wallowing in the mire!

It is another aggravation of these symptoms if such a person finds himself gradually withdrawing from his former religious companions and attaching himself to others destitute of religion. And also if he relishes worldly amusements which once appeared to him hostile to true religion. He once thought that he ought to engage in nothing on which he could not pray for the blessing of God - in nothing which would not promote the glory of God. This of course excluded him from many a scene of intemperate mirth and frolics from many of those idle and vain amusements and practices in which the irreligious world place their chief happiness. And if he now joins in these amusements and customs what clearer evidence can he give that there is but a step between him and a denial of this Master!

Finally if a person has reached this point on the scale of apostacy his heart is already filled with unbelief not in regard to the less important truths of religion - not merely in regard to its doctrines but in regard to the reality of experimental religion. He secretly believes that the notion of a change of heart is delusion - and that his own experience is nothing but a farce. And when he has reached this point of apostacy I need not attempt to prove how near he is to a denial of his Master. I only say that he totters on the brink of a precipice where destruction yawns beneath and that if he needs one push from the world or the adversary and the man is gone forever.

But I need not enlarge - I leave you brethren to make your own application of the subject. If any of us find these symptoms or a part of them to adhere to us we all know the only remedy to arrest the

disease before it has spread through the whole moral system. To awaken our fears and efforts which can be more powerfully calculated than the text! *Whosoever shall deny me before men will also deny me before my Father which is in heaven.*

And now my brethren the table of the Lord is spread (will soon be ready). If there be any in this assembly who are the devoted humble and steadfast friends of the Redeemer come ye and receive by faith the living bread that came down from heaven to strengthen and to cheer and animate you amid your dreary pilgrimage and to give you a foretaste of eternal joys. If there be any in the assembly who mourn in secret over the hidings of God's countenance and who seem to plead for mercy and comfort in vain come ye to this table - behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. See his soft hand stretched out to wipe away your tears - see his cross streaming with blood shed for your sins - and fear not to cast yourselves into the ocean of love that flows around. The table is spread. If there be any in this assembly whose love to Christ is almost choked and smothered by love to the world - come ye and look upon your dying Saviour - and as you gaze on his loveliness let the dross of the world be melted away by the tears of penitence and give the Saviour once more the supreme place in your affections. The table is spread - if there be any in this assembly have already gone many a downward step in the road of apostacy - any who have already denied their Master - shall I say to them also come ye? Yes - come ye and look on that Saviour whom you have pierced. See his meek head bowing beneath the crown of thorns and his blood mingling on his cheek with the tears he sheds for you - his apostate children. See those hands that have often been lifted in prayer for you now nailed to the cross and bleeding to wash away your sins. Yes, come now and take your seat at his table and betray that Saviour with a kiss. Nor rather boldly uncover that dagger which you carry concealed under that hypocritical mask and openly plunge it into the heart of your bleeding Saviour and as his life blood pours out through the wound his dying prayer for you shall be, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*

*[The following sentence appears in small print at the bottom of the page, apparently a later addition.]*

Come and crucify him afresh and plunge again the spear into his side and as his lifeblood flows out through the wound his dying prayer for you shall be *Father forgive them etc.*

*[Across the top of the last page:]* (to be inserted in the morning discourse)

*[Cross symbol]* An important enquiry here suggests itself whether it be possible for a man to confess Christ in a Christian land without uniting himself with the visible church? If he live in a place where no church exists he may be said to confess his Saviour if he merely live a holy life and on every proper occasion publicly avows his discipleship and defends the gospel because he can do nothing more unless it be possible to organize a church. But suppose he lives where a visible church acknowledged to be a church of Christ exists - and suppose he leads a holy life and is ready on all proper occasions to avow and defend the faith of the Gospel: but when the communion sabbath comes he separates from his brethren and joins those who disobey the commands of their Saviour. Now I ask would an unprejudiced irreligious man say that this person truly confessed Christ? He might say that he gave some evidence of piety in his life but that he did not really confess him when he neglected that act which Christ has made the distinguishing criterion of a confession. To partake of the Lord's supper is in fact the true criterion of a confession of him and therefore no one can be said to confess him who does not observe it.

Delivered

At Conway November 7 1824

At Amherst College July 4 1830

At Amherst West Parish March 1 1835

At Amherst College June 1847

## Sermon 250 Confession of Christ

[Sermon No. 250, "Confession of Christ," Matthew 10:32, 1824 Nov,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 13]

Matthew 10:32

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him  
will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

To profess to be a disciple of Christ when he was on earth amid all the obloquy that was cast on his cause and the hatred manifested towards him and his religion demanded a degree of courage and devotedness which we can now feel but faint conceptions. It was scarcely possible that mere worldly motives should have urged anyone to stand forth in the ranks of the despised Nazarene and although some might have been and actually were deceived in regard to their true characters we can hardly suppose that any were insincere or hypocritical in their profound avowal of their belief in the gospel. When dangers thus clustered so thick around the disciple it needed some strong support some cheering promise to enable him to stand firm and act agreeably to his convictions. When he uttered the text Christ furnished such a sustaining power.

He bid the disciple when subject to the sneers of men for his attachment to the cause of religion and when he felt a strong temptation to abandon his Master he bid him remember that the reward of perseverance would be an acknowledgment of him before God and the holy angels as one who had been found faithful to the cause of truth and benevolence in the most trying situation. A public declaration of his fidelity would be made in that day when the approbation of Christ would be of more value than the favour of the whole created universe: when that approbation would be at once the passport to the society and favour of God and angels and to the felicities of heaven. Powerful indeed must have been this promise in sustaining the tempted afflicted despised soul. It must have kindled within the disciple an energy that would have looked with indifference on the ridicule and even hostility and deadly persecutions of the world and carried him forward in the bold and decided path of duty with accelerated steps.

My brethren the offence of the cross has not yet ceased. It will never cease so long as it shall be true that a large mass of mankind live and die enemies to the cross of Christ. Although it demands much less resolution now to stand forth a bold and decided friend and follower of the Redeemer, it still demands more courage than many possess. It may indeed require none to act the part of an equivocating temporizing Christian - to make a general acknowledgment of Christianity and then abandon the defense of its humbling doctrines and self-denying duties: but boldly to declare ourselves in the face of the world to be conscientious steadfast believers in those doctrines which cluster around the cross of Christ and to resolve that we will obey the divine requirements and then to stand firm and maintain our ground against the solicitations and frowns and flatteries of the world. This is a course which wants at least a spark of the spirit of a martyr. We have reason to fear that it wants so much of that spirit that very many being deficient in it dare not act up to their convictions - offend so much some unrighteous friend or companions or an unholy world as to separate from them and cleave to Christ. It is needful therefore even at this day to present before the wavering halting person the stimulus of reward which



Christ presented.

But I must first answer the question (the first enquiry that demands attention in the examination of the text is) what is it to confess Christ before men?

It may be proper to begin an answer to this question by saying that a confession of Christ is something different from a possession of his religion although none can really confess him who are ignorant of his salvation and have never savingly believed on him. A man may declare ever so boldly and perseveringly that he is determined to confess Christ before the world he may come even to the communion table and thus give the most decided visible mark that he has chosen Christ for his portion and yet he may not confess Christ in such a sense as to be entitled to the promise in the text of being finally acknowledged before God. For without holiness no man shall see the Son and a man may do all this without holiness. Without possessing religion therefore no one can acceptably confess it although it may be possessed and not confessed. A man may be a real child of God and yet the world not know it but he cannot confess his religion without making a public avowal of it: for the essence of confessing Christ consists in making it known to the world that he has become a proselyte to the religion Christ taught and is resolved to conform to its requirements. I offer then as a definition that a confession of Christ consists in a deliberate decided consistent persevering avowal before the world of our attachment to Christ and his cause.

It must be a deliberate arousal: not proceeding from the feverish excitement of the moment - not forced from us by a mere sense of danger nor by the mere hope of thus obtaining everlasting happiness. A declaration of our attachment to the Saviour having such a foundation will not give a permanent expression of our feelings but will need a counter statement when these merely transient emotions or fears or selfish hopes have subsided as they will do ere long. Before enlisting in so important a cause one where we are exposed to so many assaults from the world and the adversary and where our souls are therefore in danger we must calmly count the cost. The world that darling of our hearts by nature is to be given up as a portion - conformity to it on which our hearts are so bent must be abandoned - its frowns so terrible to unsanctified nature are to be disregarded - its temptations so alluring to sense are to be resisted and the footsteps of Christ are to be followed though they lead us into the forefront of the hottest battle - and his cross is resolutely to be borne burdensome and heavy as it may prove to remaining corruption. And we are to remember too that should we apostatize after having once buckled on the armour of the Gospel a double disgrace and a double condemnation awaits us and we inflict of wound on the cause of religion that is deep and deadly. Publicly to avow ourselves determined to enter into the number of Christ's visible disciples under such circumstances demands deliberate and solemn reflection. Multitudes hurried on by the excitement of the moment have made the avowal and almost as soon have basely deserted from the ranks and proved traitors to the best of all Saviours.

It must also be a decided avowal. Those who are not for Christ are against him. Those who do not come out from the world and be separate still remain among the world. There have been enough in every age who have given to Christ and his cause a halting and half way service while their chief devotedness has been to the world. They have yielded to the world all that was essential in doctrine and practice and thought they were doing Christ service by the observance of a few ceremonies and ordinances inefficacious in themselves. They have endeavoured to reconcile the worship of Mammon with the worship of God and to unite those two things which God has forever disjoined supreme love of the world and supreme love of religion. But Christ desires no more followers who have a name to live while they are dead - no more who are afraid to maintain his cause and who yield the very life of religion upon the demands of the world. Already have such amalgamated the church and the world enough. Christ

wants those who possess at least a portion of Paul's spirit men who are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ - who fear not to maintain the doctrines of the cross and to urge its holy precepts in the face of unpopularity and reproach and even danger and death.

Again our avowal or confession of Christ must be a consistent avowal. Some appear to feel as if it were enough if they be zealous in maintaining the doctrines of the Gospel although those doctrines manifestly exert no radical influence upon their lives and in proportion to the exactness and strenuousness of their orthodoxy is the looseness and worldliness of their conduct. But these are they who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Others on the contrary conceive it to be enough if they practice a strict and pharisaical morality although they abandon the doctrines of salvation – the pillars of the Gospel - to the sneers of the sceptic and the hatred of the world. Here is an avowal of part of Christ if I may so speak and a denial of a part. But such inconsistency cannot alter by one iota the terms or the truths of the Gospel nor render it less certain that *he that believeth not shall be damned*. In order to a proper rewardable confession of Christ there must be a consistency a correspondence between the belief and the conduct or we show we are not followers of the apostles in whom such a harmony is manifest.

Is there anything of such consistency to be seen in the character the person who this year with seeming sincerity and commendable zeal publicly professes his attachment to the cause of Christ refuses conformity to the fashions and unholy customs of the world and in his general deportment appears like a pilgrim and sojourner on earth bearing the daily cross of his Saviour and seeking a better county (a city which hath foundations etc.) but the next year you see him conformed to worldly customs and fashions - he is found joining the intemperate frolick - his feet move to to the sound of the viol - he is seen at the card table in all places of social amusements but at the conference and the prayer meeting formerly the scenes of his favorite resort he is not seen nor in the society of Christian friends and his general deportment manifests that religion exerts upon him a very feeble if any influence at all. I will not ask the Christian what such inconsistency of conduct indicates: but I ask the man who makes no pretensions to religion and does not believe in its reality - I ask him how such inconsistency appears. Does it not look more like a denial than a confession of Christ? Alas I know that such a man will reply that such inconsistency in the conduct of a professed Christian shows not only that the man has denied his Lord and Master but that there is no reality in religion itself.

Finally our avowal of Christ must be a persevering avowal. I have said enough under the last particular to prove this. For of what consequence is it that a man with even so much sincerity and zeal and many promising appearances confesses Christ this year if he abandons him and denies him in the next. Think ye that for a confession of this character Christ will confess a man before his Father? Rather will he say to him, *I never knew you depart from me thou worker of iniquity*. The avowal of a man that he loves and will serve Christ when in a few months or years he abandons him does not deserve the name of a confession. It is rather betraying his Master with a kiss. It is hiding the dagger under the mask of friendship that a deadlier thrust may be made at religion. All the zeal and forwardness and favourable appearance of such a man in the beginning will not weigh one feather in favour of his Christian character but it will weigh like iron in the scale of his condemnation.

*[The following paragraph marked by an asterisk was added at the end of the sermon to be inserted at this location.]*

Of this character I have reason to believe Christian brethren was the long and well tried confession of one of our number who has recently finished his course shall I not add with joy? Surely it must have

been joyful if I do not misapprehend his character to obtain a release from the labour and sorrow of more than four score and ten years and to go to do well with that Saviour whom for more than half a century he had confessed on her. And the painful apostacies we are frequently called to witness in the church it is consoling that we can sometimes contemplate the Christian of more than fifty years standing whose faith has been that of the shining light etc. May we be followers of those who through faith and patience, etc.

The second enquiry suggested by the text is how extensive is the obligation Christ imposes on men to confess him in the manner I have pointed out? Is the obligation binding on all members or only on a part? Surely on a part only replies the irreligious man: for you have already said that a man who is destitute of religion cannot acceptably confess Christ - and surely God would not demand us to perform an impossibility. It is therefore only the Christian who is under obligations to take the public vows of the Lord upon him and declare himself resolved to serve the Lord. It cannot be the duty of the sinner to confess Christ until he is converted.

But in reply to this reasoning I ask at what time it is the sinner's duty to love God and be converted? *Behold now is the accepted time – behold now is the day of salvation.* And the moment he becomes a new creature it is his duty to make a profession of religion. He is just as urgently commanded to do this as he is to love God. And hence if it be his duty to love God now it is now his duty to confess Christ before men. It is not his duty indeed to confess Christ with an unrenewed heart and improper feelings but it is his duty to confess him with right feelings with humble devotedness and love. Every man therefore whatever be his character who neglects publicly to profess the religion of Christ violates a plain command of Jehovah and Jesus, *this do in remembrance of me.* But are those who neglect a compliance with this injunction generally sensible of their guilt in this respect? Do they feel how much ingratitude is involved in it - and how much of willful disregard of the authority threatenings and promises of almighty God? Do they realize what a dead weight their neglect of this command hangs upon religion in the world and how powerful is the influence they thus exert in favour of sin and ungodliness - and how their disregard of a divine command in regard to this subject strengthens the hands of bolder sinners in their rebellion against heaven!

*[Two single pages inserted here. See below.]*

I might spend the remainder of time allotted to me in this discourse in pressing upon this audience - especially upon those who are halting between two opinions and who are almost persuaded to be Christians the high and glorious motive to confess Christ before men which he has presented in the text. But what force can I add to the motive by dwelling upon it? In its simple statement it is more forcible than any human elucidation can make it. As soon as we read it our minds are directed to the judgment day we behold angels and men – in countless ranks assembled around the throne of Jehovah and we see the finger of Christ pointing to the man who confessed him on earth and thus turning every eye in the universe upon him and we hear the Saviour pronouncing that man his faithful disciple and saying, *well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of the Lord.* O what heart is insensible to the awakening power of such an appeal as this. But not to dwell upon it it may be more profitable though less pleasant to enquire into the reasons why all real Christians do not publicly confess Christ. That they do not is one of those facts which none dispute: although as we cannot judge the heart we are unable demonstrably to prove it. And it is to be feared that we are too apt to pronounce men to be real Christians on account of the general regularity of their lives although they do not confess Christ before men. For the very fact that they neglect this requirement furnishes us at least presumptive evidence that they have no real attachment to his cause. For myself I find it very difficult to imagine how any one

really born of God can deny himself the pleasure and the profit of a seat at the Lord's table or how anyone who is made sensible as every converted man is how much he has done during his past life to promote the cause of sin can rest easy year after year without letting the world know by a public solemn act that he disavows his former principles and detests his former conduct and warns others against following his example - much more it is difficult to see how such an one can without the most excruciating pain continue still to lend his example to uphold a irreligious men in their neglect of the ordinances of God! Still I would not say but some real Christians may do this: for the human heart is full of paradoxes. But such Christians must have imbibed extremely erroneous ideas of experimental religion and of the nature of confessing Christ before men.

And here let me remark that some persons of this character may be prevented making a public profession of religion through the darkening and perverting influence of Satan. I say they may be prevented for I am sensible there is no text in scripture that will directly prove it. We learn from the bible that the great enemy of the soul goes about taking every method in his power to oppose the progress of religion: and in what way could he do this more effectually then by keeping those in the ranks of the world who might otherwise become an ornament to the Christian profession? He can fill their minds with doubts and discouragement and spread over a false though sincere profession of the Gospel a darkness and horror that do not belong to it and make the trembling Christian believe that sincerely to profess religion without possessing it constitutes the unpardonable sin. Let all who are halting between two opinions on the subject observe the caution of the apostle to *take heed lest Satan should get advantage of them while they are ignorant of his devices.*

There is an influence from another quarter exerted to prevent persons of this character from a public avowal of their faith in Christ of which I speak with much more confidence. It is the influence exerted by irreligious friends and companions upon those who otherwise would not hesitate to come out from the world. And the grand difficulty is such persons are not sensible that they are at all affected by this influence. They have some friend or companion whose good opinion is extremely dear to them and on whom perhaps they are dependant for a livelihood and they know or fear that they should forfeit his good opinion and render themselves miserable were they boldly and publicly to avow themselves the friends of Christ. And this circumstance insensibly checks them from acting up to their convictions. They dread perhaps contention and one of a yielding disposition and moreover they believe a man may be a Christian although he does not profess religion and if a Christian he will be saved and hence they are led imperceptibly to themselves to pay more deference to the good opinion of their friend than to the commands of Christ. The very fact that persons of a serious character are surrounded by friends are destitute of piety should lead them to put a double watch upon their hearts: for they are in imminent danger of being made like their friends in regard to religion. Multitudes - multitudes have sacrificed their souls before they were aware of it.

Some real Christians are prevented from avowing their faith in Christ by remaining self - righteousness. They are not wholly destitute of a hope that they are children of God: but they dare not profess religion till their hearts are in a better state and their hope is strengthen. In plain language they mean to make themselves better before they come to the table of Christ. But you do not expect your hearts will be sanctified by anything but the Spirit of God applying his word. And is it the way to obtain his influence to disregard a plain command of Jehovah? When are we more likely to have our hearts purified than when obeying God? And the truth is we cannot have conclusive evidence of our piety until we ever endeavour to do whatsoever God commands us.

Finally some are prevented from confessing Christ through a criminal distrust of his power and grace.

They do not profess the Gospel lest they should fall away and bring a dreadful reproach upon the cause. And so you would fall away my friends were you as holy as a Gabriel unless the Spirit of God enabled you to persevere. And you are as certain of persevering if you trust in him and cry to him if you but a spark of holiness as if you were all holiness. It is just what the Saviour wants that you should feel your need of his grace and your danger of apostacy. But he wants also that when you do feel it you should fearlessly trust in him and put yourselves under his protection and enter into covenant with him and not distrust his power and willingness to carry you forward towards heaven and disregard his dying command and rely upon yourself instead of him.

But I have done - I have shown you what it is to confess Christ. I have shown the extent of the obligation and pointed out some of the causes that prevent real Christians from complying with their Saviour's inquisitions - and here I leave the subject with my audience - no I leave it with almighty God to carry it to each of our hearts and our consciences - Amen.

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*[The scanned images of two pages inserted into this document around paragraph 10 are transcribed below.]*

It is a fair inference from the positions that have been taken that it is scarcely possible for a man to confess Christ in the sense of the text without a visible profession of his faith by uniting with the church militant. Strong as may be his own confidence that he belongs to the invisible church yet in view of the world what consistency in his strongest declaration of friendship for religion if he lives in the habitual disregard of the command, *This do in remembrance of me*. If he can neglect it then others can with the same propriety. In other words the visible church might be given up. But the fact is no man can long maintain a lively hope of heaven who enrolls not his name among Christ's disciples and is not willing to share their lot in the odium the trials and conflicts of the Christian race.

And in conclusion what a motive to do this is to lead a devotedly pious life does the text present? But I fear I shall weaken the force of that motive by dwelling upon it (See the last page but two near the top sentence beginning *In it simple etc.* )

Who would not feel amply rewarded for a long life of hard labours and trials as a follower of Christ by the thrilling joys of that single hour. And yet the joy then begun shall be but the prelude of higher ecstasies would shall meet the soul of the glorified saint all along the path of his immortal existence.

My brethren every time we go to the communion board we testify anew that our desire and effort are to confess Christ before the world so that this final joy will be ours. And at this time not a few for the first time will join us in the solemn public consecration. Let us welcome them joyfully into this new arena of conflict of labour and enjoyment - the noblest they ever entered and let us all maintain our parts that the exalted beings around us who watch our conduct shall be prepared to welcome us with joy when our Saviour shall confess as before his Father and them.

Delivered

At Conway November 7 1824

At Amherst College August 19 1827 (at the first communion in college)

At Whately May 1843

At Amherst College June 1846

## Sermon 253 Exposition of Fifth Chapter of Ephesians Part 1

[Sermon No. 253, Exposition of Ephesians Ch. 5 Verses 1 to 15, 1824 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 13]

The morality which Paul preaches is always founded on the doctrines of grace and he frequently slides into the mention of these insensibly. He did not fear that those doctrines have an immoral tendency.

### Verse 1.

*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*

Be ye *imitators* of God in the duty of forgiveness.

This verse is connected with the latter part of the preceding chapter.

### Verse 2.

*And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself  
for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.*

*Walk in love* – live in love.

The latter part of the verse is an additional motive for practicing the duty of love to the brethren -

How very clearly does the apostle in this verse teach the doctrine of atonement by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ!

*A sweet smelling savour* – a sweet odour - to signify that it was all pleasing to God. In warm eastern climates nothing was more heaven-sent than odours -

### Verse 3.

*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness,  
let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;*

By covetousness the apostle means an inordinate desire of gain - and he here couples it with the grossest and most offensive of all vices. These vices should not so much as be named among Christians with approbation. I will not insult your morality brethren as to ask concerning the forms of these sins but as to the latter must we not believe that among Christians at this day it is not only named but

extensively practiced? Let all such attend to what is said in one of the following verses.

Verse 4.

*Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting,  
which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.*

By filthiness he means filthiness in conversation - those low vulgar stories and suggestions that poison the minds of youth and which are so carelessly indulged in not only by the hoary pander of vice but to the breach of good manners and of Christian sobriety by many from whom we ought to expect better things. By foolish talking and jesting Paul means those idle and loose suggestions and hints and those catches in conversation whereby modesty is put to the blush and the lascivious joke is handed about and the passions are inflamed. And I cannot refrain from asking whether this jesting and foolish talking is not common among Christians at this day without their even imagining it to be sin. Some men have so acquired the habit of conducting conversation in a joking way that seriousness sits ill upon them. But this is a fatal habit - fatal to the man himself and fatal to those around him. It is a sure sign that the man has very little sense of the presence of God: for no person can joke and jest and indulge in loose filthy conversation when he feels God to be present listening to him. Christians ought to be scrupulously exact in their conversation nor ever introduce into it any of those dirty stories or low hints and ambiguous phrases that may offend the most delicate ear. A man who indulges in such things is as a pest to civilized society and ought to be expelled from it: for he will soon reduce it to a level with himself - yet it is to be feared that many professing Christians without considering the consequences indulge in this polluting mode of conversation. But but to say the least it is a mark of low breeding and shows the man to be unacquainted with good company.

Verse 5.

*For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person,  
nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in  
the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Let the fornicator and he who in any of other way indulges in impurity read in this verse his appalling doom. He is shut out of heaven: he is sentenced to hell. And however sinners of other descriptions may mistake their characters the whoremonger cannot. Neither can he mistake his doom. He knows that the lake of fire and brimstone is his portion except to repent - he knows that he shall be gnawed by the undying worm and burned by the unquenchable fire. He knows it, did I say? No! This is a sin of such a character that it brutalizes the soul and sears the conscience too hard to feel. It closes up a man's ear against every appeal of reason and every raving of affections. It steels his heart against every generous emotion and turns out a man with Nebuchadnezzar to herd and to graze with the brutes - or with companions worse than brutes. The way of such a person is the way to hell going down to the chambers of death. On such a man the truths and invitations of the gospel make no impression. The light of heaven does not enlighten him - the love of heaven does not move him - the thunder of Heaven does



not alarm him. In fine before he can be habitually guilty of such a crime his moral feelings must be struck dead his heart be made callous to every noble and generous feeling and his whole soul be reduced to a chaotic mass of bitterness and death. Do you ask the proof of this. Go then to those abodes of licensed corruption with which our cities teem in which send forth their pestilential influence like the breath of hell over the land scorching and blasting in its progress and there will you see as fit an emblem of hell as this earth can furnish. Yet this is as sin at which almost every legislature throughout Christendom connives – a sin which it is thought of too delicate a character to meet with a public rebuke - on monster striding over the land like a Siroc and bidding defiance to the legislature and the pulpit. But it is unfaithfulness in the minister of the gospel to be restrained by the false cry delicacy from sounding an alarm loud as he can lift his voice warning the adulterer and the unclean of every description that they are rapidly hastening to hell.

Yet with characters of this description the apostle couples the covetous man and declares him also to be shut out of heaven. That is the man who indulges inordinate desires after riches or who indulges any inordinate desires till they become a habit. My brethren this is a declaration of the apostle that is calculated to make us tremble. It ought to lead us most solemnly to enquire whether we have that covetousness which is idolatry or if we have we do not possess that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Let us then look back upon our lives and enquire whether our conduct evinces that we have worshipped and served our farms our money our houses and our merchandise more than God. Let us not forget too that covetousness is a sin which most easily besets men and that the church in every age has been filled with covetous idolaters.

Verse 6.

*Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*

*Deceive you* in respect to the heinousness of these sins as some philosophers attempt to do.

Yes: the love of money and the love of pleasure of vile sensual gratifications are the two sins of almost every nation that cry loudest and provoke most the wrath of God. They are sins that have gone hand in hand like two inspiring friends over the whole world spreading misery and death in their way and sealing up the eyes and hearts of millions against religious impressions and ripening them for eternal despair. Never does the thunder of God's threatenings sound so loud as when it breaks forth against these sins - never does his wrath smoke so hotly as when venting itself on the lewd and covetous. From no other class of men does God take so few to make them heirs of his kingdom. These are the sins that have brought on the heathen world - the children of disobedience – a large majority of the complicated woes under which they groan. These are the sins in Christendom that threaten to make a vast Sodom doomed to the destruction of fire and brimstone from heaven. When these sins therefore are found in the Christian church surely God will no longer endure them but will pour out the phials of his wrath. Point me to the lewd man be he a professor of religion or not and I will point you to one who has never felt the power of religion and probably never will feel it. Point me to the man who makes an idol of property and you show me one in a similar condition.

## Verse 7.

*Be not ye therefore partakers with them.*

Partake not with them here lest you partake with them hereafter.

## Verse 8.

*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light  
in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

*Darkness* - in darkness

Is this our character, brethren?

## Verse 9.

*For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;*

Endeavor to practice all goodness etc.

## Verse 10.

*Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*

Proving by obedience what the Lord approves and thus obtaining peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost.

## Verse 11.

*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of  
darkness, but rather reprove them*

*Unfruitful* of good.

The Christian must resolutely separate from sin and sometimes reprove it publicly.

## Verse 12.

*For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.*

And so it is a shame to speak of things many are guilty of in secret at this day.

From Adam to this day men have committed their foulest deeds at midnight in secret. But the eye of God saw them.

## Verse 13.

*But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light:  
for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*

Everything that deserves to be reprov'd is made manifest by the light of the gospel since the new heart which is thereby implanted in the soul hates all sin in every shape for whatsoever makes objects manifest is light and therefore the gospel eminently deserves that title since it exhibits in its true colours and in strong contrast every kind of sin.

## Verse 14.

*Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and  
arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

This is the meaning of Isaiah 60:1. God is there speaking of the calling of the gentiles and says, *Arise shine, for the light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

It is a call to the dead heathen to awake from their wretched state.

Some think it wrong to call on sinners to arise themselves since the Work is of the Lord's. But this verse shows how unfounded is such an opinion.

It is a call to all impenitent men to awaken from sin. I bring it before this audience and address it to all in this house who are in their sins.

Do you say you cannot wait until God awakens you?

*Awake, for you are asleep over eternal fire -*

*Awake, for your time is short*

*Awake, or you will soon awake in hell*

*Awake*, for the Saviour stands ready to give you light  
He will give the light of holiness - the light of his countenance - and the light of heaven!

Delivered

At Conway June 1824

## Sermon 254 Exposition of Fifth Chapter of Ephesians Part 2

[Sermon No. 254, Exposition of Ephesians Ch. 5 Verses 15 to 33, 1824 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 13]

The Ephesians had formerly been left to grope in the darkness of heathen superstition and iniquity: *God had shined into their hearts to give them light of the knowledge of the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ.* They were called upon therefore by their superior light and knowledge to abandon the sinful practices of the heathen around them.

Verse 15.

*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*

*See then that ye walk circumspectly* (that is with accuracy not turning to the right or the left) *not as fools but as wise men.*

Verse 16.

*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

*Redeeming the time* etc. Endeavouring to make up the time you have lost in sin by a diligent improvement of that which is to come: for you are fallen on evil days - days of peril and persecution when you know not what a day may bring forth.

Verse 17.

*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

On account of this precariousness of your time be not so unwise as to spend your remaining days in sin: but endeavour to ascertain what the will of the Lord is and be unceased in performing it.

What reason have we to apply these acts exhortations to ourselves!

Institute a comparison between the time past of our lives which we have spent for God and for the world.

## Verse 18.

*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

The apostle here alludes to the Bacchanalian rites practice by the heathen. During the celebration scarcely a sober person was to be found men and women making it a point of religion to get intoxicated and then to run about like fairies singing and shouting in a tumultuous manner and similar rites are performed among the heathen at this day.

*Wherein is excess.* The word excess in this place means an entire dissolution of mind and manners and well represents the effects of intemperance.

This dissoluteness is described by Paul as contained in the wine just as poison is contained in the serpent - as if it were unsafe to taste the wine so loaded with poison.

Parallel passage Proverbs 23:29, 30, 31. Cherish the influences of the Spirit of God.

## Verses 19 - 20.

*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,  
singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always  
for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

Instead of riot and drunkenness let your cheerful hours be spent in speaking to yourselves and each other in psalms, etc. This is the Christian amusement agreeable to James etc.

We are here taught that singing is a duty for all capable of doing it to edification.

We are taught the spirit with which it ought to be done.

Always giving thanks

For all things - adverse and prosperous

We learn that all things come down to us through Jesus Christ

## Verse 21.

*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

A gentle exhortation to the proper discharge of relative duties.

Let every one accommodate himself to the infirmities of those about him – bearing and forbearing with them.

Verses 22 - 23 - 24.

*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.  
For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church:  
and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ,  
so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*

The husband is the head of the wife only as Christ is the head of the church to protect bless and save - not to oppress and enslave.

Verses 25 - 26.

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,  
and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse  
it with the washing of water by the word,*

Accordingly Paul says that the husband should exercise that love for the wife which Christ exercised for the church - and what was that? In describing this the apostle with whom it is a favorite theme digresses from the subject. For was a love which prompted him to give himself for the church - to pour out his life a ransom for the sins of his elect - that he might sanctify and cleanse by his Spirit and the washing of water in baptism by his word or with his word as the grand instrument.

Verse 29.

*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh;  
but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

The grand object Christ has in view in all these sufferings and the presentation of means is to present the church to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish. At the day of judgment this will be effected. Until that period the tares will grow together with the wheat and there will be mingled in the hearts and conduct of real Christians many spots and blemishes. But how glorious will the church shine in that period when its perfection

shall be consummated: when the rain of sin shall cease perfect love and holiness sway every bosom of every believer! Surely this will be that travail of the Redeemer's soul at which he will be satisfied. And to be pressing toward this point my Christian brethren to be advancing daily towards the mark for the prize is what our Saviour expects us and what his goodness demands of us.

From this pleasing digression Paul returns to the subject of conjugal affections and says in the 28 verse etc. Why are husband - and - wife one.? One interests and one in their feelings and sentiments.

Whoever therefore hates his wife hates himself. It is as if the head should make war with the members. He hates his own interest - and infallibly entails misery on himself. But *no man ever yet hated his own flesh etc.*

Verse 30.

*For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*

Interesting relation! How holy brethren ought to be! How circumspect! How heavenly minded! How self-denying and humble! Do you not tremble Christian brethren to think of the solemn relation you bear to Christ?

Verse 31.

*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother,  
and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*

Again the apostle resumes the subject of conjugal affection and says for this cause - that is because their interest feelings and sentiments are the same - shall a man have etc.

Verse 32.

*This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

What is a great mystery? That Christ the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of the Divine person should condescend to unite himself to a society of mortal men so intimately that they should be considered a part of him.

Verse 33.



*Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself;  
and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

Nevertheless you will not forget the subject which I am discussing from which I have several times digressed to impress upon you the nature of your union to Christ and his love in establishing that union - I repeat then let every *one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself etc.*

I am bound on this occasion to make to the husbands and wives of this audience the appeal whether they have observed and do still observe these injunctions of the apostle? I do not enquire how you appear to the passing stranger who spends but the night under your roof: but how do you appear to your families your children and domestics? Do they discover between you an affection similar to that which Christ has displayed towards the church first giving his life for it and then training it up for heaven in spite of all the perverseness and ingratitude of its members? Do they see a mutual disposition to please and conciliate and overlook infirmities to bear one another's burdens and to assist each other in treading the thorny veil of life and attaining finally to an internal union in the skies? Or do they sometimes listen to fretful and mutually reproachful words? Do they sometimes perceive between you the spirit of enemies instead of friends? Alas! It is to be feared the judgment day will disclose many a scene of hostility and hatred between husband and wife that will cause the surrounding millions to shudder! For how unnatural will it then appear how unnatural does it now appear for man to hate his own flesh! The truth is that intimate and solemn relation is often entered into through a mere vagrant fancy and without the fear or love of God to control it: and in such cases the usual result is unhappiness discord and alienation.

Nor can I leave these verses my brethren without enquiring concerning another subject woven into. Do you realize the intimacy of that relation you bear to Christ? Do you feel yourself to constitute the body of Christ, *to be members of his body - of his flesh and of his bones*? It is curious to observe with how much frequency and in what a great variety of ways Paul presents this striking figure in this and his other Epistles. He meant it should be felt by Christians. Do you feel it my brethren? Do you feel from day to day that the faculties of your bodies and minds want to be employed as Christ employed his because they are a part of Christ? O could we feel this what a salutary restraint it would exert upon us! How it would check the first risings of sin! How it would swell the tide of devotional feeling and animate us forward toward the performance of the requirements of the Saviour!

There is another choice lesson the apostle meant probably to enforce upon Christians by thus presenting the relation of husband and wife in connection with that between the believer and Christ. The marriage union is short-lived and the icy hand of death soon falls upon it bursting it asunder forever. But the union of Christ and the believer is eternal. Every succeeding year long as eternity lasts will draw closer the bonds of attachment and assimilate more and more the believer to his Lord. And dare we hope my brethren that we do really belong to Christ so as to *be members of his body and of his flesh and of his bones*? Then may we rest assured that we shall never be cast finally away: for will Christ sever the members of his own body. Let then every other attachment be broken off. Let every conjugal filial and social tie dissolve - let us be left without one earthly bond to hold us to the world. So long as we are part of Christ we will lift up our heads with joy and bless and praise redeeming love. Our hope shall rise and swell in joyful prospect of heavenly glory. This hope shall cheer us along the night of our lonely pilgrimage. Amid every trial and discouragement - amid the frowns of the world and the vexations this shall infuse holy serenity and joy through our bosoms: and even the darker dominions of death and the grave shall be to us full of the light and the glory of heaven.

Delivered

At Conway June 1824

## Sermon 255 State of the Church and People in Conway

[Sermon No. 255, "State of the Church and People in Conway," Isaiah 21:11-12, 1824 Jan, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 13]

Isaiah 21:11-12

*He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night?  
Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said,  
The morning cometh, and also the night.*

*[Hitchcock expresses concern over declining church attendance and participation; near the end he seems to be blaming himself.]*

There is no small degree of obscurity resting upon this passage especially as viewed in connection with the context. The whole of it is a short prophecy concerning Idumea or Dumah, a part of Arabia inhabited by the Edomites. *The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchmen said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.* This is the whole of the prophecy: and there is nothing in any other part of scripture that throws any light upon it. It may mean that an inhabitant of Edom here called Seir calls to the Jews in time of national calamity earnestly enquiring how long the night that hung over them would last or else by way of insult asks them how long would be the night or what was the state of their captivity in Babylon. To this the watchman replies, *The morning cometh and also the night.* That is the day of prosperity to the Edomites would ere long arrive: but it would be soon succeeded by another night of adversity.

Although this prophecy be so difficult of explanation we may be certain that to us it is of little importance since it was directed to the Edomites alone unless it involves principles that are applicable to all mankind. It does involve certain imagery that may suggest to us some important hints and give direction to our thoughts on this occasion. Every one must perceive in the passage an allusion to the police of large cities in which watchmen are placed in various parts to give notice of disorder during the night and to proclaim at intervals that all is well.

The ministers of Christ are often in scripture compared to watchmen of this character or to the sentinels of an army. *Son of Man*, says God to Ezekiel, *I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me.*

Every Christian minister ought to regard himself as placed in the same situation as being an overseer of the flock and as being bound to give notice of impending dangers by lifting up his voice like a trumpet crying aloud and sparing not. God has stationed him upon a particular part of Zion's walls and if he suffer the enemy to come in without blowing the trumpet of alarm the souls who are slain will be required at his hands. Every minister ought also to feel as if the voice of God addressed him at particular intervals in the language of the text, *Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?* What is the condition of the souls committed to your care? What are their dangers? Are they near or remote? Within or without? What is the state of preparation for the assaults of their enemies? Are they

vigorous and watchful? Are they good soldiers of the cross? Or are they slumbering on their posts and unmindful of their danger? To these and many other questions of the like character ought the minister of the Gospel to feel his obligations to answer as did the watchman in the text – *The morning cometh and also the night*. That is he must answer these enquiries according to the state of his flock. And what more proper season for such an examination than the advent of the new year! This ought to be to us all a period for pausing and anxiously and thoroughly examining into the state of our souls - into our relations to God and to our fellow men - a period for correcting what is amiss and repenting over past sins and entering upon a new and reformed course. At this season I feel as if the voice of God addressed me with the enquiry, *Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?* What is the religious state of the people among whom you watch for souls as one who must give account. It becomes then a duty to answer these enquiries and in my closet at least to lay the state of this people before God.

And my brethren may it not be profitable to exhibit also before you the results of that examination? For if I misapprehend in any respects I may thus hope to be corrected and if I do not misapprehend may I not hope that such an exhibition will lead to some degree at least of reformation?

I know indeed that in adopting this course I must deliver to you to day one of the plainest discourses you have ever heard. For I must present the things in our condition that discourage as well as those that encourage our hopes concerning Zion. I must present deficiencies as well as excellencies: and if there be any among us who are enemies to religion and who rejoice in its declension no doubt such will find much to gratify them in this discourse. But brethren the picture I am to hold before you is one which I am compelled daily to spread before God: and whether it please or offend - whether it be regarded as exaggerated or not I dare not present it before you with any other appearance than I present it before God. Bear in mind however that I mean to make no personal allusions - that is I describe no individuals although if individuals find their character described I do earnestly pray the spirit of God would induce such to make the subject a personal one. The worst thing I desire for every sort of persons is their eternal salvation.

I consider the Lord then as addressing to me the enquiry, *Watchman, what of the night?* and in reply I say some things are encouraging and some things discouraging.

First some things are encouraging - the morning cometh.

And shall I say too much when I say that some among us give evidence that they have drunk into the Spirit of Christ? I pretend not to know any man's heart - and I also know that the fairest external masks of religion sometimes cover the blackest of purposes. But when we see a person uniformly humble uniformly consistent in his conduct – in whose mouth is the law of kindness - whose deeds of benevolence are liberal yet unostentatious - whose pursuit after the world appears to be neglected by a regard to the Divine Will - who attends regularly on the means of grace - reads diligently by his bible and adheres modestly yet firmly to the great doctrines it contains - whose conversation appears to be heavenly – who seems destitute of spiritual pride and whose tenor of conduct is that of one who feels that this world is not his home – that he is not his own but has been bought with a price and is bound to consecrate himself a living sacrifice holy acceptable to God - must we not conclude that such a man is really renewed in the temper of his mind that he performs in secret those doctrines which the Christian does and has the feelings and desires of a Christian. And will not this description apply to some among us? Does not charity answer yes? Does not justice answer yes. Nay does not even the irreligious worldly-minded man answer yes? Do you enquire who are the individuals to whom this description applies?

Suffice it to say that they are not probably such as imagined they were the models from which this description was taken.

If however we may hope that there are some consistent devoted servants of God among us we may be encouraged to hope that by their prayers and exertions they will be made instrumental of bringing down the special influence of the Divine Spirit for the conversion of sinners. Sinners can resist everything else: but the prayers and the holy lives of the devoted Christian they cannot resist. They have no weapon that can turn aside the irresistible arguments that press from this source upon their hearts. There is a heavenly atmosphere that surrounds a good man – and happy are those or those may be happy who live within it. The Christian parent or neighbor is faithful in warning and exhorting and praying for his children and friends and the probability is greater that they will be converted than of those who live in an atmosphere that is full of the poison of sin.

And have I not reason to say also as a ground of encouragement that some among us do really feel for and mourn over the desolations of Zion. Are there not some closets that witness earnest the daily the effectual prayer in behalf of the sins of impenitent? Low as may be our general condition in a religious view can it be doubted that there are some who do really feel for this desperate condition of dying sinners and who wrestle like Jacob for them? If so there is some hope that may well prevail like Israel. God may bear long with them he may delay an answer to their prayers in order to humble them and prove them and know what is in their hearts but he is not deaf to their cries – nor can he ever forget their earnest supplications. *In due time they will reap if they faint not.*

The commendable and deep interest that some in this place take not only in charitable objects around them but also in those grand and mighty plans of Christian benevolence in operation for the extension of the gospel in the world and the readiness with which they submit to self-denial and retrenchment of superfluities that they may make liberal contributions of their property to carry these plans into execution affords another ground of encouragement. Such pecuniary sacrifices are not indeed an infallible test of Christian character. *For though a man bestow all his goods to feed the poor and have not charity he is nothing.* Yet it is hardly credible that the man who thus takes a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the heathen world should neglect to support religious institutions at home or deny the great truths of the bible or disbelieve the reality of experimental piety. Point me to the man who is liberal in his charities to the heathen and I will point you to one who is liberal in his charities to benevolent and religious objects at home. Point me to the man whose hand is clenched against the claims of the heathen and I will point you to one whose hands are rarely more than half open to the claims of misery and religion around him.

The general attendance upon the stated sabbath worship of God among us is another encouraging circumstance in the religious condition of this place. And yet ought I to call that general which probably does not embrace half of the inhabitants of this town? And ought we to derive much encouragement from the fact that our congregation is sometimes full when a little unfavorableness in the weather nay when the very appearance of a prospect of unfavorable weather reduces that congregation more than one half? But it is a ground of some encouragement if men ever attend upon the preaching of the Gospel – that grand instrument in the hands of God of their conversion. The general harmony that prevails among us is also a ground of encouragement as well as comfort. And I might proceed to mention several other circumstances of the like character. But we are all inclined enough to look at the favourable side of the subject. Let us therefore proceed look at the dark side of the picture painful as it may seem to us.

Secondly some things in a religious state are discouraging – *The night cometh.*

I notice first the declension of religion in the church. That such a declension exists will I trust be doubted by none. Who does not see that a fatal apathy is come over some of our souls? Who does not see that the love of the world has gained over others a dangerous ascendancy and frozen up the warm blood of piety? It is feared that the feelings of religion are so buried up by the rubbish of earthly things in many of our souls that they are almost lost and have no power to melt away the ice with which they are surrounded.

And if the friends of Christ are thus slumbering on their posts – if religion with them be almost reduced (and it is to be feared that such is the case) to little more than a cold and lifeless round of services and duties what may we expect will be the condition of those whose hearts were never warmed by divine love but whose affections are given undividedly to the world? If Christians put not up for them the fervent effectual prayer they must live without God they must die without hope. In accordance with this view of the subject I am compelled to say that during the past year there has come to my knowledge scarcely a single instance - if a single instance of hopeful conversion to God or even anxiety of soul in this place. My brethren ponder upon this fact! Out of a population of 1700 souls but little more than 200 of whom have ever professed religion out of this great number rarely a single instance of conviction or conversion in a whole year! *O tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.* Out of the 1500 in this place who never professes religion only two individuals have joined themselves the past year to the communion of this church and I believe none have united with other denominations. *Ah, the ways of Zion do mourn because none come to the solemn feasts.*

But the mere neglect of a profession of religion and attention to the concerns of the soul is not the worst part of this subject. It is too obvious to be concealed that the general sense of the importance of religion that exists on the minds of the people in former years has greatly diminished during the past year. A great and alarming indifference to the subject has succeeded – the love of the world – conformity to the world – and a devotion to its pleasures and vanities have become stronger and more rooted and more manifest. I have been astonished – I have been cut to the heart to witness the rapid decay of a general sense of religion among us the past year. It has seemed like the melting away of the snow by the rains and the winds of the spring. And I cannot refrain from expressing the solemn conviction that should twenty succeeding years witnessing in each of them a like increase of sin and indifference to religion all respect for it would be lost and there would stand up scarcely a solitary individual to vindicate the rights of an insulted Saviour and to drop a tear over the ruins of our Zion. This may seem an extravagant fear – I hope it is – but I hope against my own convictions.

I remarked in another part of this discourse that it was encouraging circumstance that the house of God on the sabbath was not forsaken in this place. But what shall I say concerning stated week day conferences and prayer meetings? I speak not concerning those occasional district lectures that are holden only at an interval of several months for these are not usually neglected: but I speak of stated weekly conferences and prayer meetings which we have for the most part attempted to maintain. And what would be the conclusion I should make concerning the interest this people take in the cause of benevolence and missions were I to judge by their attendance upon the monthly concert? And yet if a man does much for benevolent objects is it not reasonable to conclude that although he does live remote he will occasionally be present to unite in prayer for a blessing on on his charities? And if he be never present at such meetings is it not reasonable to conclude that he takes little interest in the subject? Our church prayer meetings although holden but ones in a fortnight rarely assemble more than

one in ten of the members of the church. Concerning occasional prayer meetings conferences expository meetings and the like I have no doubt but they are agreeable to the practice of the apostles and to the will of God: and I well persuaded that if men have not their attention specially directed to the subject of religion during the week there is but little probability that the services of the sabbath will be of much avail to them – I mean as to any saving benefit. Let a man devote himself entirely to the world during six days and it will cost him but little effort to cast off the slight convictions even the most powerful preaching may make on him on the seventh day. Believing thus it cannot but be extremely painful and disheartening to me to observe how very thinly attended are our stated weekly prayer meetings. I have often changed the mode of conducting these meetings making them now a prayer meeting now a conference and now an expository meeting. The time and place of meeting has also been often changed. But all to no purpose: I have been in the course of my life in many places with the difficulties of attending meetings was as great as among us (and I acknowledge this to be great) and at a time when religion was at a very low ebb and yet brethren I am free to confess that rarely if ever did I find the prayer meeting and the conference so poorly attended as with us. In other places it is customary for the youth whether pious or not to be constant at such meetings. But here with a few honorable exceptions they seem to avoid the place where prayer is wont to be made. I fear that there is a feeling too prevalent among them that although it is well enough for Christians to attend such meetings yet it is unnecessary for them until they are converted - an idea than which none can be more dangerous.

When I find so little attention to the preaching of the word out of season as the apostle expresses it with what feelings do you suppose brethren I come to this house of God to deliver my message. I confess that I preach very much without faith. I feel as if the world had got too strong a hold of the hearts of my hearers to be dislodged by my feeble efforts and as if my words could not penetrate through the unbroken shield of prejudice and worldly mindedness which has been gathering round the heart during the week. I know indeed that God in sovereign mercy can penetrate it: but the Spirit of God does not usually carry convictions to the hearts of those who neglect the means of grace within their reach.

But on the subject of weekday religious meetings a very solemn enquiry suggests itself to my mind. Are not these meetings so thinly attended because they are so poorly conducted? Does not the whole difficulty lie in my incompetence or unfaithfulness? I am willing to believe that this may be the fact. But my friends let not my unfaithfulness in this respect be the means of the loss of your souls. On this account forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. Lay the blame holy upon me if you will – I deserve to bear it – tell me plainly of my deficiency – send me away from the vineyard of the Lord as an unfaithful steward - do anything to me if you will not sacrifice your souls.

The last discouraging circumstance among us which I shall here mention is the fact that there are so many in this place who will give evidence from year to year to others that they are new creatures in Christ Jesus still neglect to make a public profession of their faith in their Saviour. That an unusually large number of persons of this description exist among us cannot be denied and the fact that I met so many in the view of charity are thus prepared for the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper is not a discouraging but an encouraging circumstance. Their neglect to obey the dying command of the Saviour is all that discourages. I would not question the sincerity or the conscientiousness of their scruples. A belief of their sincerity is what produces much of our distress. We feel them to be our brethren in Christ traveling towards the same heavenly world and it is distressing to see them still visibly mixing with an ungodly world instead of entering into the green pastures of salvation the Saviour has provided. That delightful banquet he has spread for them which might invigorate and refresh their souls they dare not taste lest they be found not having on the wedding garment. It is doubly distressing to witness the very

fatal effect of their example upon the ungodly while they would not for the world be instrumental of destroying souls. But alas the world claims them as their own so long as they do not visibly forsake its ranks. And so long as they can point to those of their own numbers who give as good evidence of love to God and as those who profess religion how easily will they ward off every arrow of conviction and feel that in such company they are as safe as if they belonged to the church. Thus do such persons unintentionally serve as a rampart behind which sinners repose in security and so long as that rampart remains how discouraging is it to attempt to reach the hearts or their consciences of sinners. But were this bulwark removed – were these persons to profess the religion of Christ and take a decided stand on the Lord's side the ungodly would stand forth unshielded and could not avoid seeing the great gulf that exists between them and the righteous. And my brethren it is important for us to enquire whether our walks and conversation is not such as to prevent these persons from coming to our communion. I have exhausted all the arguments of which I am master to persuade them to sit down at the table of the Lord. But without effect – I can offer nothing more – I can only pour forth my sorrows into the bosom of my God and Saviour in view of the failure of all my efforts to remove this discouragement out of the way.

In the afternoon I shall endeavor to present the imagery in the text in a different point of view from what I have now exhibited and intend it as in part an application of the discourse I have now presented you. May the Spirit of the Lord accompany his word.

Delivered

At Conway January 1824



## Sermon 256 [Preparation for the Lord's Table]

[Sermon No. 256, "Preparation for the Lord's Table," I Corinthians 11:28, 1823 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 14]

I Corinthians 11:28

*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*

*[The first three pages (25 paragraphs) seem to be a distinct sermon; the last few pages may be unrelated.]*

As believers in the gospel of Jesus we do not suppose all men to be entitled to a seat at the Lord's table. And if only a part of men have a right there - it must be owing to something peculiar which they possess in their characters or conduct which the others do not - which renders them fit partakers of this holy ordinance while the others are unfit. The particular object of this meeting in the house of God is to render ourselves fit for this solemnity. The important question then arises what is it that constitutes a fitness - a state of preparation for partaking of the Lord's supper? To answer this enquiry will be my main design in this discourse.

And in the first place this fitness must be habitual.

E.g. A man must be a Christian - Regenerate - with holy desires - hatred of sin and holy actions.

Secondly this preparation must be actual -

A Christian must not only be in the habit of religion but grace must be in actual exercise or he is not in a fit state for eating and drinking acceptably at his Master's table. *Let a man examine himself etc.* This is the preparation necessary to the Christian before he approaches the communion table in order that he may see whether all his graces are in lively exercise - and if they are not so that he may quicken them.

1. Let him examine his knowledge of the Gospel.

1. The essential perfections of God - Trinity etc. 2. Man's condition before and since the fall. 3. Character and offices of Christ. 4. Justification by faith. 5. Nature and ends of the supper.

2. It must be something more than speculative knowledge.

How shall we determine that it is? 1. If we relish these truths. 2. If they humble us. 3. If they lead us to fly to Christ. 4. If they produce good works.

2. The Christian preparatory to the communion should examine his faith.

Saving Faith is a confidence in God's moral character especially as exhibited in the mediation of a Saviour.

1. Is it strong? 2. Does it make the heart bleed for sin? 3. Does it fill the soul with adoring views of the Gospel plan of salvation? 4. Does it work by love – love to God - to Christ - to man? 5. Does it show itself by works? 6. Does it overcome the world?

3. The Christian should examine his repentance.

This is still necessary for the Christian. There is a true and a false repentance. How shall we know whether we exercise that which is genuine?

1. We shall feel a deep sense of the evil of sins. 2. We shall hate it. 3. We shall feel a cumbrous burden. 4. We shall actually crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. 5. We shall resort to Christ's blood and Spirit. 6. We shall pant after holiness.

4. The Christian should examine his love - *Now abideth the faith etc.*

Exercise towards 1. God 2. Christ 3. The brethren 4. All mankind

1. Love to God is known 1. By his efforts to please him. 2. Fear of offending Him. 3. Love of communion with him. 4. Concern for his cause. 5. Longing to be with the Son.

2. Love to Christ is known by the same marks - and also 1. By a special affection for him as an atoning High Priest and Intervener. 2. By making him an example. 2. By being ready to displease and cross our nearest friends rather than injure Christ.

3. Love to the brethren is known to be true. 1. By loving them because they bear the image of God - are united to the same Saviour - have the same faith - similar trials and joys and are looking to the same end of their toils. 2. And sympathize with them. 3. Prefer their company. '

4. Love to mankind. 1. By praying for them. 2. By taking every proper opportunity to save their souls. 3. By doing them all the good in our power.

5. The Christian should examine his humility. 1. Has he a low sense of himself - his attainments his services etc. 2. Is he more apt to suspect himself than to censure his neighbours like the eleven disciples at the Lord's table. 3. Does he see and lament the emotions of pride self conceit and depravity. 4. Does he fly to Christ alone.

6. The Christian should examine his relish for Spiritual things. 1. Do we rejoice at the approach of this feast. 2. Are we willing to be at all the pains of praying self examination - crucifying sin - and parting with the world in order to enjoy Spiritual food? 3. Do we feel the dissatisfied with any food but Christ? 4. Is spiritual food sweet to our tastes?

7. Examine his resolutions of new obedience. 1. Do I count the cost in making them? 2. Are they made without any reserve for a particular sin? 3. Have we a deep sense of our dependance in making them?

*Means of Preparation*

1. Meditation 2. Seeking all the means of grace 3. Secret prayer 4. Ejaculations. These things ought especially to be done Saturday evening and sabbath morning.

*[Fragment of a page.]*

...us my brethren, it is my deliberate opinion that we are not as much prepared as at first view we might seem to be. Nor shall we be prepared till we have a much deeper sense of our backsliding state - till a more pungent conviction of our ingratitude show cause our repentings to kindle together - till the motives of our efforts and prayers shall be more purified from the dross of selfishness - till we have a deeper sense of our need of the blessing till our faith shall take a firmer hold upon the promises of God and until we feel that we are nothing and that Christ is all and in all. And let me add my fears also that ere all this change take place within us the blessing will be lost - and the Saviour wearied out by our stupidity will have proceeded to other conquests where his path is opened for his chariot wheels...

*[The last four pages appear unrelated to the sermon.]*

Is it strange that with such a prospect before him the thought of death should be absolutely overwhelming to the sinner? Is it strange that when any of those terrific messengers of wrath which God sometimes sends among the nations to execute his judgment come among a people those unprepared for death should make the most desperate though impotent efforts to escape even out of God's hands: that they should fly from the post of duty forgetful of everything except that that poisoned dart which they see death brandishing over their heads? But how important are all such exertions! For in that war there is no discharge - Oh why will not the unregenerate man at once go to that Saviour who can entreat the sting of death. Then can he face composedly - not with atheistical apathy but with holy composure this kind of Terrors and stand calmly on the post of duty where God has placed him. Then though called to traverse regions where pestilence and dangers avail him he can cheerfully go forward saying with Howard when his friends would have prevented him from going into the deadly climates lazarettos and prisons of the eastern world, *It is as near to heaven from Constantinople as from London*. But the sinner has no such blessed hope as this to sustain him. Yet how easy to obtain it if he were only willing to humble himself as a little child and secure it at the hands of the Saviour. Has his proud heart refused the precious boon: and death must always remain the king of Terrors to him whose every hope and every enjoyment are terminated the moment this tyrant strikes the blow.

And yet my hearers if it be true that in every religious society a large proportion of men live and die without a change of heart then have we every reason to believe that not merely ten of our number but perhaps twice or thrice or five or ten times ten are even now selected and marked by the god of this world for the devouring fire and other everlasting burnings. And although we know not who the individuals who are the individuals yet God knows them all. He knows who will die without religion - he knows that very many of us are now resisting convictions and ripening for destruction. But although so many of us now our various and perhaps bosom friends are soon without repentance to be destroyed forever yet how little interest it excite among us to ascertain who the individuals are and how little anxiety to rescue them from their terrible fate! How much deeper interest would be manifested by the drafting of ten of our number from among them by the drafting of fifty or a hundred into hell! Yet the time is near when we shall hear the judge call them all by their names. And who is it that is called first? Ah, it is one who has often sat with us to the communion feast! Who comes next? An amiable youth who always seemed so near the throne of God that everyone felt that he could not be ultimately lost. Who next? One whom we have seen often reading the bible and even among the anxious during a revival! Who next? A roommate. Who next an intimate whom we have never faithfully warned. Who

next? Is it I? The son of David have mercy upon us – thou son of David have mercy upon us before that day of final doom arrives!

Delivered

At Conway July 1823

## Sermon 259 Progress of the Christian Towards Heaven

[Sermon No. 259, "Progress of the Christian Towards Heaven," Job 5:26, 1824 Mar, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 14]

Job 5:26

*Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.*

*[This sermon has many metaphors to planting seeds, harvesting, weeding and the life of a Christian. The last page about a senior member of church who recently died; possibly Pastor Emerson (see cover, "Conway 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1826, at the Funeral of Rev. John Emerson." "Rewritten Sept 1855" is scrawled across the cover. The last page or sentence is missing.]*

Such an end as this Eliphaz one of the comforters of Job declared should come upon him if he committed himself unreservedly to God. In the course of his conversion we all know that Eliphaz and all Job's friends said some things which were not agreeable to the will of God. And the sentiment contained in the text although true a general principle of the divine administration yet admits of many exceptions. Since some most eminent and devoted saints have been called in the morning or the meridian of life into eternity. The text however contains a striking illustration of the final departure of a servant of the Lord who had grown gray in fighting the battles of faith and finished his course with joy.

*[The following four or fives lines have been crossed out in pencil.]*

in pursuing the subject I shall consider

First the implantation of holiness in the heart.

Secondly no growth

And thirdly the harvest.

First its implantation. The fine parable of the sower as uttered by our Saviour here occurs to mind. *A sower out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; in the thorns sprang up with it, and choked up. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, received the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.* The truths of God's word then are the seed that is shown in the human heart in order to produce them the plants and the fruits of holiness. But why is it that one heart into which this seed falls is good and honest and that of another rocky or choked with thorns? It is not because men's hearts naturally differ from one another: for the bible

expressly declares that God *fashioneth their hearts alike*. But that same bible also declares that the *preparations of the heart in man is from the Lord*. We find it also promised concerning Israel in the days following the Messiah, *after those days saith the Lord I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts*. The Holy Spirit also testifies that, *Paul may plant and Apollos water but God giveth the increase*. In short true from every part of Scripture we learn that the reason the seed of God's word is made effectual in the heart of man is that the Spirit of God renders it so. The soil by nature is alike bad in all but where the grace of God operates it moulds that soil into a fertile spot and spreads through it a general warmth and roots out the tares or prevents them from springing up and thus fits the heart (spot) for receiving the incorruptible seed of God's word and causing it to shoot forth into a beautiful plant sending its roots deep downwards and shooting its branches wide upwards to bear abundant fruit.

And in order that a man may *come to his grave in a full age like a shock of corn fully ripe* it is important that this holy principle be implemented early in life. No doubt many who live unconverted until the meridian of their days with nothing but attacked tares flourishing in their hearts in such luxuriance become by the special abundant grace of God prepared for heaven ere they die. But after all when they look back upon life they will see it most clearly and feel it most deeply that they have produced much less fruit to the glory of God than those who early embraced the Saviour.

Their holiness has not sent its roots so deep nor its branches so high nor acquired such firmness to resist the rocking tempest as that of him who remembered his Creator in the days of his youth. The seed which the husbandman casts into the ground in midsummer may spring up and flourish rapidly: yet its growth is too much hurried to calculate upon that solidity of parts or that excellence and abundance of the grain which he sees in those plants which were sown in the spring time and have more slowly more surely advanced toward perfection. The husbandman who suffers tares and weeds to grow unmolested among his grain till they have acquired full strength will certainly find it more difficult to subdue them than if he watched their first appearance and applied faithfully the hoe and the plough and the probability is that he will not be able to wholly subdue them after permitting them to gain so from a footing. And the same is true of the man whose heart remains uncultivated till the morning of his days is gone by. The affections and energies of his heart have been in a great measure exhausted by feeding his evil habits. And now that they are wanted to nourish the holy germ that would expand in his heart and rise into strength and beauty, they can afford but a scanty supply. In order that religion should exhibit itself in its most perfect form and harmonies in man it must grow with his growth and strengthen with his strength. In order that his old age may bend with its clustered fruit the seed must be cast into the soul in the springtime of life.

But I trespass upon the second head of the subject where I proposed to consider the growth of religion in man.

We have seen how it is that the seed is made to germinate in the spot so barren and sterile as the hearty man is by nature. It is not by any inherent warmth which that soil possesses nor by any other life giving quality found in it. The seed might lie buried there forever did not the showers of divine grace copiously descend and the warm rays of the Son of Righteousness shine upon it. And those showers and those rays are equally necessary to nourish the tender plant and make it advance to strength and beauty and fruitfulness. Unless the showers of heaven water it - unless the breath of heaven blow upon it - unless the light of heaven shine upon it - soon would it wither away and die - or the cold fronts of selfishness would nip the opening bud and destroy the expanding flower and disappoint the hope of harvest. Christians are *sanctified says the apostle in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*. And it is *by beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ that they are changed into the*

*same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Yet it is not hence to be inferred that cultivation is unnecessary. As well might the husbandman conclude because his grain would not mature and bear fruit without the genial influence of summer suns and reviving showers that therefore he might neglect to cultivate the plants in expectation that the result could not be thereby affected. But he would find - however clear his reasoning on the subject might seem to his feeble intellect that if the hoe and the plough were suffered to be unused the weeds and the tares would root out his grain and his anticipated harvest would fail. No less certainly will the man who fancies himself a Christian fail of growing in grace and of recouping a final and eternal reward who neglects a vigorous cultivation of his Christian affections and graces. These cannot be matured at once any more than the plants of the earth. Plants may thrive faster in a greenhouse than in the open atmosphere: and so may the Christians surrounded by everything favourable to his growth in divine knowledge make a more rapid advancement than he who has to contend with a thousand obstructions. But under the most favourable circumstances his increase in holiness is gradual not paroxysmal. Regeneration indeed is an instantaneous work: since there cannot be a moment in which a man is neither an enemy nor a friend of God neither prepared for heaven nor for hell. But sanctification is a progressive work - a work of the whole life subsequent to regeneration. When a man once puts his hand to the plough he is never more to look back - he must not look back - he cannot look back in the scripture sense of the term and be fit for the kingdom of heaven. It is a most fatal delusion the young and the ignorant sometimes imbibe that to obtain heaven is the work of a day or a month or a year. What if the husbandmen the moment he saw the seed he had sown beginning to shoot up were to give over all further anxiety and labour and feel certain of the harvest! No less dangerous is it for him who imagines he sees the seed of God's word springing up in his heart to give himself no further trouble on the subject but sit down with the soothing quietus that the work is God's and there is no danger but he will carry it on. But are you sure it is the work of God? Are you sure the plants of holiness have begun to grow in your heart? The truth is if you are disposed to neglect their cultivation on this ground they are nothing but tares that resemble grain. You have mistaken their nature: but by their fruits you will ultimately know them to your sorrow.

The husbandman does not think his field of grain safe a moment until it is surrounded by a well - built fence. Alike necessary is it for the Christian to guard the field of his heart by prudence correct principles prayer and faith. Paul exhorts such to take to themselves the whole armour of God that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. He represents the real believer as a warrior armed in panoply complete - having his loins girt about with truth - before him the breastplate of righteousness - on his feet the preparation of the Gospel - on his head the helmet of salvation - in his right hand the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God and in his left the shield of faith. The prudence of the believer will secure him from rushing heedlessly into places of danger where temptations assail him with their poisonous breath and spread moral death through his soul. It will guide him from those contaminating examples among which holiness will wither and die like the plants of Arabia when the blasting Siroc of the desert passes over them.

Another enclosure that must be thrown around the Christian heart is correct moral and religious principles. If error lodge in the heart it will pour a stream of corruption into the heart. If the agriculturist should come to embrace the belief that weeds may be suffered to grow among his corn without injury we all know that his corn would be choked and harvest fail. And if the Christian admit into his belief important or fundamental errors surely they will eventually destroy or greatly injure the holiness of his heart. He who means therefore to grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Saviour must diligently perseveringly and with earnest prayer consult the lively oracles of God. They are the rich repository of

all that is important necessary grand and beautiful in religious and moral principles. And the man who reads them with a determination and desire to conform his life to those principles will stand unmoved amid the floods of errors and hold on his way deviating not to the right hand or to the left. *He will be built up on his most holy faith:* and he will realize an answer to the prayer of the Saviour, *sanctify them through thy truth - thy word is truth.*

But all the defenses of prudence and correct principles will be feeble without a spirit of prayer. This alone opens the windows of heaven and draws down thence a blessing. Point me then to the man who makes rapid advances in grace in whom the Christian virtues flourish and look beautiful and depend upon it that is a man of prayer. He feels the weakness of his own arm the deceitfulness and depravity of his heart and the strength of the enemies of the soul and he looks to heaven for strength and light and courage to run the Christian course with joy.

But the husbandman does not stop with mere desires and prayers for an abundant harvest. And so with the Christian he vigilantly watches against his own heart and the world and the adversary. He is suspicious of anything so deceitful as sin anywhere and everywhere and sees through a thousand of those specious delusions whereby unwary souls are entangled and fall. It is no matter how well armed is the soldier if he sleep upon his post: it is no matter how well the farmer once provided for the security his fields if he now neglects them - nor watches against the various encroachments to which they are exposed. It is no matter how apparently sound was the Christian conversion nor how correct are his principles if he has sunk down upon the bed of sloth and does not keep a look out against the insidious enemies of his soul. If he do not watch he is certainly their prey. If he do not watch his soul will be choked with tares and laid waste by marauders and holiness will languish and bear no fruit.

Nor is it less important that the Christian exercise habitual self denial in order that his Spiritual growth maybe be vigorous and rapid. He must cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye that offends. He must not merely lament the wickedness of his heart but make resolute efforts to purify it and curb his rebellious disposition. The diligent farmer does not spare the weeds among his corn however beautiful may be their foliage or flowers - or however harmless they may seem at the present. Nor does the faithful Christian spare the simple desires and feelings that spring up in his mind on account of their apparent beauty - remembering that even Satan is sometimes transformed into an angel of light - nor for their seeming harmlessness well knowing that every day roots them deeper and fixes them more firmly in the heart.

God also in addition to his special grace often cultivates the heart of the Christian who he intends shall come to his grace in a full age like a shock of corn fully ripe in his season by sending afflictions upon him. The plant that grows up in some shattered spot on which the winds and the storms of heaven never beat may indeed be elegant but it is feeble. The mountain oak is made firm by the rocking of the whirlwind and the storm. So the man who passes through life in an almost unruffled calm may be a Christian: but his character will not have that stability and strength which he has over which God rolls the waves of sorrow and suffers the storms of adversity to beat upon him. The soul that seems most ripe for heaven and bears the strongest impress of heaven is one that has often reeled and staggered but which never was broken under the raging tempests of affliction.

By such cultivation and means as these holiness is made to spring up and grow to maturity in the heart of man. In the third place I am to consider the harvest.

The sickle of the reaper is now put forth and the precious shocks of corn is gathered. Death is permitted



to cut down the plant that has so long stood to spread its shade over the weary and to refresh the hungry by its fruit. But it is not cut down till it is fully ripe – till it can be no longer useful where it stands. To drop the figure the good works which are the fruit of such a man as the text describes live though he dies. They live in the remembrance of posterity though dead he yet speaks. Though dead his remembered councils and example serve to confirm the wavering to strengthen the weak and encourage all to persevere.

When the reaper gathers the fully ripe shocks of corn he lays it up in the granary. When death comes down the fully ripe Christian he lays him in the grave. But it is not to sleep there forever. No there is an immortal soul within – a germ that is carried by angels into the garden of God in heaven. There it will spring up and flourish and bear fruit secure from the cold wind and killing frost of the earth warmed and nourished by the river of life and the sun of righteousness. There will it continue to shoot its roots downward and its branches upward throughout eternity. It will forever be covered with beautiful flowers - forever loaded with golden fruit. Spring summer and autumn will there combine and throw their united charm over the whole.

*[The last page has been crossed out in pencil but it looks like the original ending for the sermon and is transcribed below.]*

In conclusion of this subject may I not apply it to the recent departure of our aged and esteemed friend and Christian brethren into eternity. In a full age has he come to his grave and I think I may add *like a shock of corn fully ripe in his season*. For fifty years has he stood by decidedly on the Lord's side and sat down with his brethren at the Lord's table and for many years has he been a father in the church. Possessed of talents much above the common lot and of sterling integrity he has long and frequently occupied stations of importance and responsibility among his fellow citizens. And may I not appeal to the gray headed among us for evidence that the seed of God's word sown in the morning of life in his heart and made to spring up by the grace of God has continued to flourish and to present not only the foliage and flowers but the fruits of holiness? Certainly his Christian life was long enough to afford a decisive test of Christian character. For although a man may deceive himself and the world for a few years yet it is difficult to retain the mask of self deception for half a century. And although under the infirmities and feebleness of advanced life our friend found a cloud obscuring his hope: yet this seemed but the result of the labour and sorrow with which the years above three score and ten are visited and God in tender mercy took it finally away and the last rays of his setting sun shone from an unclouded sky - lighting up the countenances of anxious friends with thankfulness. He lived till the period of his active usefulness were gone: and now that he has come to his grave thus fully ripe in a variety of senses who could wish him to return to endure the labour and sorrow of years on the verge of fourscore. Painful as is the pang of separation could even his afflicted friends desire this? Nature may answer yes: but certainly faith will answer No. No. It is God - the merciful God who has done at: and he was not taken from us till he was fully ripe – ripe as we trust for being transplanted into the garden of God.

In view of this providence and in view of this subject let us all remember that if we would come to our grave as a shock of corn fully ripe in its season - we must early begin to cultivate the naturally barren soil of our hearts. We must early be renewed in the temper of our minds - we must assiduously improve the means we enjoy of growing in grace etc. If a religious principle is not already implanted within us let us remember that they are occupied by tares and brambles. And what fruit will they yield? The fruit of these things is death. They bear the apples of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah. And will these be transplanted into the...

Delivered

At Conway March 7 1824

At Conway June 28<sup>th</sup> 1826 at the funeral of Rev. John Emerson

## Sermon 260 Gospel Liberty

[Sermon No. 260, "Gospel Liberty," John 8:36, 1824 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 14]

John 8:36

*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

*[Hitchcock discusses the Fourth of July, then the anniversary of the death of Jesus; maybe this was given later on or about Easter; he never uses the word Easter. He mentions the evil of slavery but repeatedly states that man's slavery to sin is far worse (see paragraphs 8 and 17).]*

This is the anniversary day (We have commenced the anniversary week/Yesterday we celebrated the day when) on which our fathers rose in the might of oppressed humanity and declared themselves an independant nation. The cornerstone was then laid of the edifice of national freedom and happiness which for forty-eight years has been rising and extending over this great continent. To that act of independence (patriotism) under the blessing of heaven we are indebted for the distinguished civil social literary and religious principles which we enjoy and which render ours of almost every land the pride and the glory. Had our fathers shrunk from that public declaration - we might now have been (groaning) under the yoke of servitude - the blessings of education might have been unknown (barbarism and ignorance might have pervaded the land) persecutions for conscience sake might have stalked among us armed with firebrands and instead of worshipping God with none to molest or to make us afraid we might have been bowing today before a shrine we detested and had our consciences chained to the car of bigotry and superstition. We were ungrateful then on this day set apart for recounting the mercies of heaven and stirring up our cold hearts to gratitude we were unpardonable to suffer such a day to pass over us without recalling to mind the deliverance wrought by the power of God through the instrumentality of our fathers. In no part of the divine government is the hand of God more distinctly visible if men will but look at it than in the changes that take place in nations. The man therefore who is in the full enjoyment of the blessings heaven has showered upon this land of freedom and yet suffers this day to pass over his head without feeling any gratitude towards his fathers and to his father's God will not keep an acceptable sabbath to the Lord. What claim has he to be considered either a patriot or a Christian.

But we are reminded this day my hearers and this day is commemorative of a still greater deliverance. *This is the day which the Lord hath made:* the day when he burst the bars of the grave - never broken before and completed his triumph over the powers of darkness. We are reminded this day of that glorious deliverance from the power and curse of sin and death which was obtained by the suffering and resurrection of our adorable Saviour. Nay my brethren it is the day in which we celebrate by the holiest rites of our religion the event that broke the chains of Spiritual slavery and restored our souls to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It is not to deprecate the value of civil freedom that I would attempt to exhibit the superior value of religious freedom. But it is to show you of how much greater importance the soul is than the body how much more valuable is an inheritance in heaven than an inheritance upon earth. Along with civil liberties there always exist some painful defects arising from the imperfection and sinfulness of man. But religious freedom is ultimately perfect and supremely glorious. A man may be in full possession of civil freedom and yet his soul be subject to the most degrading and oppressive of all

bondage I mean to the slavery of sinful lusts. But the meanest slave who is manacled to his tasks and feels the lash of oppression if he has been made free by the blood and Spirit of Christ enjoys the liberty of which nor man nor devils can ever deprive him. *If the Son therefore shall make you free ye shall be free indeed.* These Jews to whom these words were addressed were chained and riveted in the triple bondage of sin prejudice and Satan. But they saw not and felt not the chains that held them down and they resented the idea that they were in any sense slaves. Some of them pretended to believe on Christ and to detect their hollow heartedness he says to them, *if ye continue in my word then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, we be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them verily verily I say unto you whosoever committed sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the son abideth forever. If the Son therefore shall make you free ye shall be free indeed.*

Such is the feeling - such the dark ignorance of impenitent men concerning themselves until a light falls on them from heaven and discloses the chains that tie them to the car of the world and of Satan. But those whom the truth has made free have hearts to celebrate and adore the grace that burst asunder their chains and made them the adopted sons and daughters of the most high. This is the day of their celebration: the day which commemorates their deliverance from sin and Satan and these symbols - this bread and wine are the appointed and simple yet striking mementos that point them to the trials and conflicts of their great Deliverer and he could say, *the battle is fought the victory won.* And such a victory demands not merely an annual but a hebdomadal celebration.

Christians in the first place celebrate today their deliverance from the power of ignorance and prejudice.

And it is salutary for them to remember that they were once under this thralldom. They were ignorant of the character of the true God and supposed him altogether such an one as themselves. They knew nothing correctly of the Lord Jesus Christ and his cross. Of their own hearts they were shockingly ignorant and their prejudices were strong against the general system of gospel truth. Bound by so mighty a spell they would forever have remained in the state had not the Holy Spirit been sent with his convicting influences into their hearts: for they were not only ignorant of divine truth but ignorant of that ignorance so that they made no efforts for deliverance. While prejudice swayed their wills with a strong bias against the truth of God's word they fancied themselves to be impartial and their minds open to divine truth.

But when the Son of God rolled away from their souls this heavy cloud of ignorance and prejudice how sweet was the light of liberty that beamed into their souls. From the mount of freedom they looked down into the dark dungeons where they had so long been confined and saw the heavy chains that had dragged now knocked off and their souls broke into the exclamation, *O sing unto the Lord a new song for his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.*

Secondly Christians celebrate today their deliverance from the power of sin.

Who has not often read of the severe bondage of the West Indian slave until our blood boils within us - until he almost heard the lashes of the taskmaster and the agonizing shrieks of the victims and saw his blood trickling down upon his chains. But every one of us has voluntarily for years been subject to a bondage more oppressive than the West Indian slave has endured. There cannot be a more cruel brutal and severe master than sin: and we have all of us been under his entire dominion for a long period. We served diverse lusts and passions - we were bound by them furiously onwards towards the gulph of

eternal ruin yet were careless of the consequences. We fancied musick in the clanking of our chains and complained of every thing else but our bondage. Nay at the very moment when we were oppressed more than the vilest bond slave we fancied ourselves like the Jews to whom Christ addressed the text to be altogether free and gloried in our freedom just as every ungodly man now does.

And who was it that took pity on our oppressed souls and knocked off the fetters and gave us our independance? (This wine the emblem of the his blood flowing from his body - this bread designating that body broken and mangled on the cross) tells us significantly how much he suffered to accomplish that deliverance and his name is written on on all the services and ordinances of this house this table it is written on each of your hearts – tis Jesus the first and the last. I say not indeed that the Saviour has freed the Christian so entirely from sin that he is never harassed by it indeed he is sometimes overcome by it and trampled down again in the very dust. But he maintains an habitual freedom from the power of the monster and though he is compelled still to wage with him an eternal war and to set armed sentries at every avenue of his heart and to keep his sword drawn bright and burnished and his armour ever buckled around him till he knows he shall finally conquer - and he feels something of the glorious liberty of holy beings. He is not the perpetual slave of sin. Sin is usually under his feet. *Being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness. For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. But now being made free from sin and become a servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

And now what blessing is there in civil freedom worthy to be compared a moment with the privilege the Christian enjoys of being delivered from that worse than Egyptian taskmaster sin? Grateful then as we should be to those who rescued us from the tyranny of civil rulers how much higher should our gratitude rise towards them who by the sacrifice of himself tore asunder the fast riveted fetters of sin and brought us into the liberty of the sons of God. We are made free by the Son surely we are free indeed.

Thirdly the Christian celebrates to day his deliverance from the bondage of Satan.

One of the strong delusions by which the prince of darkness keeps his servants ignorant of their chains consists in keeping them ignorant that they are led captives at his will. The very men who are performing his will and are led about by him and his pleasure are those who treat the idea of his influence with ridicule. And my brethren we have all belonged to this number in years past for the apostle represents all the deluded who are in an unconverted state and we have all been in that condition. But where is the tyrant on earth whose service would not be preferable to that of Satan. A Nero and a Caligula were angels of light compared with this angel of darkness. Yet how loudly has the voice of mankind been raised against the Roman tyrants and how justly too while but few complain of the oppression of the prince of tyrants.

But Blessed be God *for this purpose was the son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.* No other arm but that of a Jesus Christ could break his grip from our necks. And if we are Christians indeed that yoke is broken and although this evil spirit may harness and distress us for a time and lead us from God by his stratagems yet we have only to resist the devil and he will flee from us. There is one weapon which he cannot resist - a spirit of fervent prayer.

*For Satan trembles when he sees*

*The weakest Saint upon his knees. [Source: Hymn, William Cowper, 1779]*

And renewed by the strength of his Saviour, the Christian may go on his way rejoicing that *Satan will be bruised shortly under his feet*. And who would not rejoice and exult in his deliverance from the iron and grinding dominion of this faceless being in the universe. Who would not adore and love that Saviour who with his own blood accomplished the work!

Fourthly, the Christian celebration today his deliverance from the tyranny of the world.

The whole world we are told lieth in wickedness and the grand characteristic of all unrenewed men is an inordinate and supreme love of worldly objects. It is the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eye or the pride of life that chains and engrosses us all before Christ establishes his throne in our affections. But if he do reign then there the world is dethroned. For we cannot serve two masters we cannot serve God and Mammon. And it is a deliverance from the most degrading servitude. What galley slave was ever more to be pitied than the man given up to the most capricious of all despots worldly pleasure? What convict chained in the mines of Siberia was ever more in bondage than the man in full chase after riches? What Eastern Nabob was ever more cruel and fickle towards his cringing slaves than fame and fortune are towards their votaries?

But Jesus Christ came into the world to dissolve these triple chains: and in numerous instances he has done it and the wretched captive like the new fledged bird comes forth and exalts in his glorious liberty. It is true the believer must struggle all his life against the temptations of the world for his heart still hankers after it. But he is not habitually subject to its dominion. He keeps it for the most part under his feet and despises its empty baubles when they interfere with the pursuit after the riches of Paradise. And the believer well knows that none but Christ can draw away our affections from earthly objects and fix them upon eternal things - nothing but his arm can open our prison doors and bid us go forth into the freedom of the gospel. Let us therefore adore and love our great Deliverer.

Fifthly Christians celebrate today their deliverance from the penalty of the law.

Law is not a tyrant but holy just and good. The difficulty lies on the part of man. He is not holy nor just nor good and therefore he becomes obnoxious to the penalty of the law. For this contrariety of his character to the law is just what that law censures and for which its penalty falls upon him. And it has fallen upon everyone of the race of Adam and we were all by nature rebels under sentence of eternal condemnation. And the grand enquiry was how we could escape. The law could not remit its severity: heaven and earth might pass but one jot or tittle could in no wise pass from the law till all should be fulfilled: and all would not be fulfilled till we have suffered the torments of eternal perdition. Thus shut up as we were in the prison of despair there was not a ray of hope to light up the cheerless dungeon. But a blessed deliverer came. He bowed his neck beneath the heavy curse and bore it away in triumph exclaiming, *It is finished*. A voice from the throne of the eternal replied, *God can now be just while he justifies the believer in Jesus - Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have everlasting life*. The prison doors flew open and all were invited to go forth and breathe the sweet air of liberty. Many still prefer the filthy cells of their dungeon: but some in every age have gone forth and robed in a luxurious righteousness have been able to exclaim, *there is now therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. The Son hath made us free and we are free indeed*.

Finally the Christian celebrates today his deliverance from the sting of death.

Through the gloomy valley of death all must indeed pass for there is no discharge in...

*[The next page, number 8 of the scanned images, appears to be covered by a new sheet. See the transcription of that sheet following the end of the original sermon below.]*

And the consideration that the liberty which the Son of God bestows is eternal stamps upon it an infinite superiority to every kind and degree of liberty that is enjoyed on earth. What is it to be delivered from civil oppression in comparison with a freedom from sin and on many a soul the question may not impress the superiority of the latter. But when I ask what is it to enjoy civil freedom for a few years on earth when compared with spending eternity in all the freedom from sin death and sorrow that God can bestow every heart must feel the truth of the text, *if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Yet Oh my brethren it is after such freedoms as this that we are aspiring. We celebrate such freedom as this today procured for us by the greatest of all sacrifices the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall not enter in his praise and commemorate his works and bow down to his authority and strive to perform his will! O let the hearts that feel not this subject keep far away from the communion board.

But my brethren if the freedom which the son of God bestows will become more and more glorious and perfect throughout the ages of eternity let us not forget on the other hand that the bondage of sin will become more and more insupportable. In the world of woe sin and Satan will reign with uncontrollable dominion and eternally press their yoke heavier and draw their chains tighter upon their miserable victims. O think of being the eternal slave of sin and Satan. And yet how many souls around you attached to you by tender ties (bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh) are confessedly under the power of these monsters who are rapidly fitting to become eternal bond slaves to the vilest of masters! You feel and weep and pray for the oppressed Africans groaning under a bitter servitude. But weep still more for your children and friends who are led captive by Satan at his will and dragged at the heels of sin - and are born down by the cursing a broken law and for whom the dungeons and the chains of eternal despair are preparing. O think of their bondage - remember that it is eternal - remember that they can be ignorant of their condition and will not believe your warnings and you cannot but feel and weep and pray more earnestly for them that God would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. If these children are not speedily converted fathers and mothers triple fetters of sin and Satan and despair will be wound and twisted around their souls in coils that cannot be unraveled and riveted and sealed by the seal of eternal death.

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*[A sheet appears to have been affixed to the left panel of page 8 of the scanned images which covers the original text.]*

Yet what a spectacle of inconsistency will be exhibited all over our land during the week on which we have entered! We shall find that in many cases the men will most clamorously celebrate our national independence are themselves the vanist slaves to sin and Satan to be found among us. Nay they will make use of this very occasion and serve their vile masters. They will become the irreligious panders to riot and revelry and will lie down and let the car of intemperance roll over them all day while exulting in their supposed freedom. And let none of us forget when we join as properly we may in this natural jubilee that others may see us to be bound in chains far more galling than those which our fathers broke and if we have not been made free by the Son certain it is that angels weep over our enslaved condition and the whole holy universe calls on us to rise and burst our fetters.

## Delivered

At Conway July 4 1824

At Amherst College July 5 1829

At Amherst College July 5 1835

At Amherst College July 5 1840

At Amherst College June 29 1845

At Amherst North Parish July 4 1858



## Sermon 261 Aggravations and Alienations of Afflictions to Those Whose Friends Have Died at a Distance

[Sermon No. 261, "Aggravations and Alleviations of Afflictions to Those Whose Friends Have Died at a Distance," II Samuel 18-33, 1824 Sep, EOH, Series 3, Sub-series A, Box 8: folder 14]

II Samuel 18:33

*And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my Son, my son!*

We have in this passage a striking instance of the strength of parental attachment. If any thing can destroy it in the father's bosom it must be ingratitude and obstinate rebellion. Yet in no instance were these more outrageous than in that of Absalom. The indulgence of his father had spared him his life when guilty of murder and the reward returned was to make an attempt to usurp the throne of his father. But defeat followed the effort and he lost his life in the battle, which established once more the security of David's throne. Yet his ardent and immeasurably indulged affections for this incorrigible child overcame at once all his joy for his own deliverance and that of the kingdom and he yielded himself up to the indulgence of immoderate grief. There was a want of submission to the divine will: indeed he seems for the time to have forgotten that his bereavement was from God and to have thought of nothing but his departed Absalom. There was one thing it is true in his case that might well sting with the keenest anguish the bosom of a pious father. He had never witnessed in his son the least evidence that he was prepared for death by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost but on the contrary the most decided evidence that he lived and died a determined enemy of God and man. David therefore must have believed him to be in hell lifting up his eyes in torments without any hope of deliverance. It was probably this thought that swelled the torrent of his grief and gave to a bitterness none can know but those who have felt it. All other pains are slight or light compared with this. And it can find no alleviation but in the thought that it is the Lord and that his judgments are right and true.

The reflection also that Absalom had died a violent death - that he was in a moment called into eternity and had no time to exercise repentance - this was another aggravation to the blow that fell on a father's feelings. He had hoped perhaps that his perverse heart which would not listen to the voice of instruction while in health might be brought on the bed of sickness to a sense of itself and be led to mourn aright over its past wickedness. But his unceremonious and sudden fate had taken away the last hope of an agonized parent.

Finally it was an aggravation of the bereavement that Absalom died at a distance from David. He could not be present to give counsel consolation or assistance nor to close the eyes - nor decently to deposit in the earth the remains of his son. All that was left not strangers but to enemies - and his body was cast into a pit and covered with stones instead of being buried in the splendid sepulchre he had provided.

It is to this last named aggravation of King David's sorrow viz. the death of Absalom in a distant place unattended by his friends – it is to this circumstance I would request attention of my hearers while I attempt to set before you some of the considerations that aggravate

And secondly some that tend to alleviate the death of friends at a distance from their connections.

It will be perceived once that in this division of my subject I have a reference to the case of some of those who now hear me. May God render his word not only the instrument of their consolation but also of preparing them for honor glory and immortality. May he accompany the affliction he sends upon them and the word he sends to them by the operating energies of his Spirit.

The suddenness of the intelligence is usually an aggravating circumstance in the death of friends at a distance. In the case of David there was for a few moments a balancing between hope and fear for a short period as two messengers were dispatched from the field of battle the first of whom said nothing certain concerning the fate of Absalom but he only saw a great tumult but knew not what it was. Yet in most cases the extent and bitterness of the catastrophe breaks in one sentence upon the unprepared mind. In such trying circumstances we need at least a short time to get ready for the painful intelligence. We need time to summon up the fortitude and above all to offer up a prayer to heaven for strength to sustain the shock and for grace to improve it aright. Death does indeed sometimes fall in an equally sudden and unceremonious manner upon some one of our friends beneath our very eye and we see them drop in a moment into eternity and we have not time to say they are dying but only that they are dead. He usually however lingers for a time over the victim before the final blow be given: and therefore as a general fact the suddenness with which such intelligence of the disease of absent friends strikes us may be reckoned among the aggravations of sorrow.

A second aggravating circumstance in such a case is that some survivors could not be present to minister to comfort of their sick friend - to sustain his failing heart by the consolations of sympathy and to follow to the grave and take a final adieu of his remains. Since no care however kind is equal to the care of friendship and nothing tends more to alleviate the pains of sickness and to counteract the power of disease than the solacing attention of near relatives - survivors in view of these considerations can rarely avoid the recurrence of the thought that with the kindly care friendship could bestow their departed friend might have recovered. They may have the strongest assurances that medical skill exhausted its resources and kindness was most prompt in vain: yet still the idea will haunt them that the alterations of friendship might have effected what sciences and kindness could not. And if not there is a melancholy satisfaction in seeing the remains of one we love deposited safely in the bosom of the earth secured from the fury of wild beasts and from the storms and winds of heaven. To the cold eye of philosophy these considerations may seem of little moment and to tend but slightly to aggravate the removal of friends. But let the philosopher himself be bereaved under such circumstances and the feelings of his heart implanted there by heaven scorning the slow calculations of reason will tell him that these considerations do lend a powerful additional poignancy to the bereaving stroke.

Thirdly a circumstance in such a bereavement as I am considering is that we cannot be present to witness the state of mind with which our departed friend left the world. The mental exercises of a sick bed are usually powerful and sincere. We cannot indeed determine from the manner alone in which a person leaves the world his true character in respect to religion. But after all something may usually be gathered from the state of mind at that trying period giving a confirmation to the opinion of his religious state formed from the tenor of his life. Have we reason to fear from the view of a man's life that he has never become a new creature in Christ Jesus? The sincerity of a dying hour will not permit him to

conceal the fact if he has no hope. Does his life give evidence of his Christian character? Hardly will you fail to see now and then a gleam of faith shining amid the darkness of the deathbed. Even if the dying man is in himself destitute of hope surrounding witnesses will see his soul laying hold on the cross of the Redeemer and cleaving to things unseen and eternal. And we are fond of listening to the dying declarations of our friends.

We know they will not deceive us at that time and that as they view the things of religion and of the world so essentially shall we view them when we come to die. We therefore permit their counsel at such a time to lie with weight upon our hearts. Who has not perceived as he listened to the mourners melancholy story with how deep an interest he dwelt upon the dying speeches of the departed soul! Who is not seen the most absorbent heart melted by a solemn reproof coming from lips just ready to be sealed in the silence of death? And finally who does not find the dying admonitions or consoling declarations of some departed friend so deeply imprinted on his memory that neither time nor earthly changes can efface it? But the mourner we are considering is deprived of the satisfaction and useful instruction such a scene might have furnished him: and this privation adds a bitterness to his cup of woe.

But I turn now to the things that tend to alleviate the poignancy of such a bereavement. For God never lays on his creations trials more severe than he gives them strength to bear they will but lean on him. Is it not enough then to assuage the severest anguish to recollect that it is God who has done it - it is the work of our best friend and not of an enemy. God sees the trial to be absolutely necessary in order to effect some object of more importance than our comfort else he would not bring it on his creatures: *for he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men but for their profit*. He sees the trial to be necessary precisely under the forms and with those attendant circumstances in which it comes. It may seem to our sceptical minds the result of mere chance that our friend has perished in a strange and distant land. But tis in fact as much a part of divine providence as much as foreseen for appointed event as the final destruction of the world. For God's agency extends to every event throughout his vast dominions. And we are sure that whatever we suffer we suffer it from the hands of a friend who will not chastise us more severely than our best good requires. If our bereavements have aggravations it is because he sees them to be absolutely necessary for us it may be because our hearts are too hard to be melted by an ordinary bereavement - or because ordinary trials have failed to bring us to repentance and unless a more powerful agency be brought to bear upon us we must infallibly be lost. Surely in such considerations as these there is enough to alleviate the severest trials that flesh is heir to.

But secondly another alleviating consideration is found in the fact that God is alike present in every part of the universe. Wherever our friend may have perished we are sure it was within the circle of Jehovah's being. The same mercy to forgive and the same ear was open to his dying prayers. Let not a cold hearted unfounded scepticism insinuate that Jehovah has retired into his own essence and is regardless of the sufferings of his creatures. *For like as a Father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame he remembereth that we are dust*. If not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him much less does he suffer a rational accountable and immortal being to perish unregarded. No: wherever the sick man makes his bed - be it removed ten thousand leagues from kindred and friend - be it in the uninhabited wilderness - *the Lord compasseth his path and his lying down and is acquainted with all his ways. For whither shall we go from his Spirit or whither shall we flee from his presence? If we ascend up into heaven he is there: if we make our bed in hell behold he is there. If we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall his hand lead us and his right hand shall hold us*. He hears every groan of the sick and the dying - he knows their every want - and not a sigh ascends from their bosoms unheard or unregarded. If it be best he can with infinite ease rebuke

the disorder and say, *arise take up thy bed and walk*. Or if he sees it best to let the feeble frame sink under the attack he can sustain the fainting spirit through the final conflict. You would regard it a joyous circumstance were you informed that a near friend had happened to be present with your absent child when sick and dying. And is it not a still greater source of consolation that Jehovah was there - Jehovah your best - your kindest - your almighty and most merciful friend?

But does your heart still feel as if it needed some other alleviation? You feel perhaps that the separation is final - that the sleep of your friend is long - and that you shall see him no more forever. To meet and quell such feelings I have another alleviating circumstance to mention. The separation between you and your departed friend is not long - it is short - tis perhaps but for a day or a week or a year or at most but a few years the day is hastening rapidly on when you will meet him again in eternity. The period is not long before you will stand with him before the bar of Christ to give an account of your mutual conduct towards one another. Are you a parent mourning the loss of a child? There are you past the noon of life and your sun is fast sinking towards the horizon soon to set in death. The gray hairs here and there upon your head tell you most emphatically that it will be but a very short period before you will behold again your departed child. Are you a brother or sister mourning the loss of a brother? That same great destroyer who laid him low may even now be aiming at your heart the fatal arrow and at longest he will soon number you among his victims and ere you are aware of it you will stand with your departed brother to be judged according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or whether they be evil. Had David turned his eyes forward and deliberately reflected upon that day so near him when he should meet Absalom his inconsolable grief for a departed child would have been swallowed up in his anxiety to prepare for that meeting. For he then must show that he had been so faithful to his child that his blood would not adhere to his skirts. He must declare to his Judge what sort of an example he had set before Absalom - how diligent and persevering he had been imparting to him religious instruction - and how often and faithfully he had prayed with him and for him. And would mourners in general think themselves more of meeting their departed friends at the judgment seat than of their amiable greatness here - the effect of sorrow would be vastly more satisfactory than it now is - and their inconsolable regrets for departed worth would be almost forgotten in their trembling solicitude lest that meeting should overwhelm them with confusion.

To that great day for which all other days were made would I wish to turn the thoughts of the mourners who hear me. I would impress it on them their minds that the time is very short before the friends whose removal they now lament will meet them again before the August judge of quick and dead. To prepare them for making that meeting a joyful one was the intention of providence in thus afflicting them. A preparation an important preparation must be made by us all for that meeting or the result will be dreadful beyond description. And God kindly sends us afflictions whose tendencies is to turn off our thoughts from the world and direct them to the things of religion. If we remain deaf to the powerful voice that comes up to us from the fresh graves of our friends our hearts are in a state of most alarming stupidity. If we can look forward to that solemn period when we should shall meet those friends again and not be led seriously to enquire what is necessary to prepare us for that meeting God have mercy upon our souls for they are sleeping the sleep of death.

So to the youth of this place the subject addresses itself: or rather the providence that occasioned this discourse addresses them. One and another of those formerly their companions have fallen in a distant region: and they will see them no more till the day when they meet to receive their final doom. There is enough in this providence I doubt not to excite the sigh or the tear of recollected friendship. But I entreat you suffer not this to be all. I call on those among you who treat the things of religion with a contemptuous sneer I call on you to pause and think upon your ways. I call on you to look into the grave

where you must ere long die - I call on you to look to that strict judgment seat where you must soon appear - I call on you to think of undying worm which will forever gnaw you and of that unquenchable fire which will forever consume you except you repent. I call on those of you who live on day after day without prayer - I beseech you as you lie down at night without lifting one cry for mercy to remember that you must soon lie down in the grave - and in eternal woe unless your hearts and your lives be changed. I call on that numerous class who in spite of the counsels and warnings of friends continue to live on in a state of careless indifference concerning your souls. O I ask you to look up and see the hand of God in his providence stretched out to stop you in your mad and thoughtless career and to recollect that that hand is able to destroy and must and will destroy both soul and body in hell unless you awake from that delirious dream in which you stumbling away perhaps the last hours of probation. I call on those of you who in your infancy have been dedicated to God and baptized into the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost - I beseech you stop this day and consider how much fiercer that wrath of God will burn on that forehead on which the water of baptism has fallen. You who are resisting the kind entreaties of your parents to embrace religion and who treat with indifference all their prayers and tears for your souls. O let me ask you to reflect how insufferably bitter will be the remembrance of their prayers and tears when you come to lie down in blackness of darkness forever! I call on you who with convictions of the truth of religion and of your need of it still follow on in the course your more daring companions pursue and seem more afraid of incurring their reproach than the displeasure of God. O I entreat you to ask yourself what support these ungodly companions can give you in a dying hour and whether you would be afraid of their reproach when the Son of Man shall deny you before his Father and the holy angels. O I call on you all my friends to remember that death may even now be pointing his javelin at your hearts.

Reflect that the God whose mercy you have to so long abused may soon give you up to your chosen way to ripen for destruction. O that I could persuade you to pause - to stand still one hour and think of death judgment in the flames of hell. My heart yearns for you - I tremble - I tremble for your condition. In faithfulness I must tell you that among our youth - yes among you my young friends there is a most painful indifference concerning your souls. I cannot but regard your situation as eminently critical and dangerous. These are not idle fears thrown out to excite a false alarm among you. They are solemn the daily the deliberate convictions of my heart. The thought that so many of you who are young are destitute of religion and turn a deaf ear to warnings and entreaties presses down my soul into the dust. The thought distresses and disheartens me every time I enter this desk. It follows me into my study and occupies my thoughts in the wakeful hours of night and amid the business of the day. These youth are perishing - these youth are perishing is the thought that passes again and again through my soul: and yet all effort to awaken them seems unavailing.

But why should I thus unfold my private feelings with any hope of moving those who are unconcerned when their own souls are in extreme danger? Oh then they must go on in the ways of sin and finally reap its wages. It is a mournful spectacle to the Christian but he cannot awaken the soul. He can however free his soul from the blood of others. And when we who minister at the altar have plainly and faithfully told you my young friends of your danger what more can we do but in the presence of God and angels to declare that we are free from your blood and that your blood rests on your own heads.

Delivered

At Conway September 19 1824

## Sermon 500 Retrospection

[E. Hitchcock, *Retrospection: A Sermon, Delivered in the Collegiate Institution at Amherst At the close of spring term, May 13, 1823* (Sylvester Judd, Jr, Northampton, Mass., 1823)]

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### RETROSPECTION

A Sermon, Delivered in the Collegiate Institution at Amherst  
At the close of spring term, May 13, 1823

By Reverend Edward Hitchcock  
Pastor of the Church in Conway

NORTHAMPTON:  
PRINTED BY SYLVESTER JUDD, JR.  
1823.

*The existence of a powerful and interesting revival of religion in AMHERST COLLEGIATE INSTITUTION, gave occasion for the following sermon. It is yielded to the request of the members of that institution for its publication, not on account of its literature, or theology; but in the humble hope, that by the blessing of God, it may subserve the cause of experimental piety, by promoting the important work of Retrospection.*

### SERMON

#### PROVERBS v. 12, 13.

*How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!*

This passage well expresses the feelings of many a miserable being, both in this world and the next. Solomon does not indeed represent it as actually uttered by any one; but he warns his son to attend to the lessons of wisdom he delivers, *lest he mourn at last*, in a strain as deep and distressing as this. He speaks in this place of a particular sin, cautioning his son against the snare spread by the *strange woman, whose feet go down to death, and whose steps take hold on hell*. But many guilty of other sins—those who have turned a deaf ear to any other dictates of wisdom, and given themselves up to the

commission of iniquity, have felt this self-reproving lamentation in all its force and all its bitterness. The insufficiency of vicious indulgencies to satisfy expectation, and the positive misery that almost infallibly goes hand in hand with them, does not urge us to refrain from them half as powerfully, as the thought of viewing these indulgencies hereafter as the cause of our destruction. The ruined sinner could bear the present suffering with composure, could he drink the waters of oblivion. But amid all other decays of body and mind that are the result of sinful courses, the remembrance of his sins becomes more and more vivid as he sinks lower in misery.

Although our probationary state consists of a series of opportunities to embrace and practice virtue and avoid vice, yet some of these favored moments are more propitious and urgent than others; and just in the degree in which they pressed our duty and interest upon our notice, will be the distress of a retrospect and the magnitude of the consequences, if we did not improve them. There are, indeed, some special seasons in the life of almost every man—a certain fortunate, or rather providential disposition of circumstances—which to seize and improve, is life, is fortune, is everything: — which to neglect, is misery temporal and eternal.

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Neglected, all is lost.*

In the further consideration of the text, I shall not dwell on the particular temptations Solomon had in view when he gave the warning: But I wish to present an illustration of the principle on which that caution is founded—viz: that the remembrance of misimproved or neglected opportunities is one of the bitterest ingredients in the cup of human misery: Or, to state the principle in more general terms, retrospection is one of the principal sources of misery in this world and in the world to come.

To illustrate this truth, and also to render it impressive on our consciences, demands no elaborate arguments. An appeal to experience will, carry conviction along with it, unless, our hearts are too hard to feel, or the accompanying blessing of God be withheld.

It is a curious construction of the human mind, that those very faculties, which, under the guidance of a virtuous or holy principle, exert all their force to render a man happy, do, when under the influence of a sinful principle, exert an equal power in making him miserable. That same energy of conscience, which spreads a holy serenity and joy over the soul of the good man, operates, alike powerfully, in planting daggers in the bosom of the sinner. That same will, which carries out the soul of the saint of love to God with a resistless bias, hurries away the ungodly man, with an overpowering impetuosity, to the commission of those sins that drown the soul in wretchedness. That same memory, which exhibits the path of life to the Christian, strewn and bordered with flowers, paints, in all its wintry dreariness, the rocks, the briars and the thorns of the sinner's course. And those same affections, which in the child of God, flow in such a placid and peaceful stream towards heaven, in the enemy of God, foam and dash like a devouring Charybdis, hurrying the soul downwards to hell.

It is obvious, then, that the principle that retrospection is one of the principal sources of misery in this world and the next, will be most happily illustrated by keeping in mind this contrast—this complete

contrariety in the operation of the same faculties, according as they are under the power of holiness or sin; so that the very same means prove to one man, *a savour of life unto life*, and to another man, *a savour of death unto death*.

Let us turn our eyes on the world and we shall find examples enough to illustrate this principle. — And here might I appeal to many of the biographies contained in the holy scriptures. I might ask you to look at Adam, and imagine the feelings that must have agitated his bosom as he was driven before the Lord out of Eden, and turning round, beheld Paradise guarded against his readmittance by cherubims and a flaming sword, while he saw the thorn and thistle starting up around him, mementos of his sin and ruin.

*Now conscience wakes despair,  
That slumbered; wakes the bitter memory  
Of what he was, what if, and what must be  
worse*

Or I might exhibit Cain before you, a lonely outcast, bearing about him a mark of God's displeasure, condemned to live when existence was a curse, and crying out in the anguish of his soul, *my punishment is greater than I can bear*.

*Oh wretched state! Oh bosom black as death!*

Or I might quote the case of Saul, from the period when *the Spirit of the Lord departed from him and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him*, and the remembrance of his sins haunted him with the most dreadful apprehensions.—Or the case of Eelshazzar, when the appalling *mene mene tekel upharsin* broke in upon his revelry.—Or the case of David, when the faithful prophet, with a cutting emphasis, exclaimed, *thou art the man*.—I might also recur in the case of Peter, when after his denial of his master, the Lord turned and looked upon him with a glance that went through his soul. And what more striking illustration of the power of retrospection to render the sinner miserable could be found, than a history of the last days of Judas Iscariot!

On this subject too, I might recur with propriety to the records of profane history. Volumes of instances might thence be produced, in which retrospection has harrowed up the soul with the keenest anguish and spread an Egyptian darkness over the future. Not to mention individual cases, however, there is one general fact which shows how solicitous the ancient heathen were to avoid the recollection of the past. My hearers probably will anticipate my referring them to the invention, in their mythology, of the fabled Lethe, or the stream of oblivion. But however interesting it might be to support the proposition laid down in the beginning, by a particular reference to facts like these, yet, as a selection must be made, I choose rather to bring before you instances which are frequently seen in the ordinary intercourse of the world. These, because nearer to us, are calculated to be more impressive.



The case does sometimes present itself, in which a child is so instructed from his earliest years, that the impressions of parental tutorage remain powerfully operative even down to grey hairs. The parent early taught him, perhaps, the virtues of industry, economy, honesty and perseverance; and the child did not resist the united force of precept and example, but *obeyed the voice of his teachers and inclined his ear to them that instructed him*, — Ere long he finds his possessions and reputation increasing, and as he takes his place as a member of society, he is respected and beloved. Whether he had been trained up to an agricultural, or mechanical, or professional life; whether his was the industry, and honesty, and perseverance of the farm, the shop, or the study, it matters not; since the fruits of these virtues, in any lawful employment, are returned seven fold into his bosom. And •when the past recurs to his memory, he recollects with satisfaction the instructions of his parents and teachers, because he listened to them; and now he experiences all the reward this world can bestow upon his obedience.

But the painful reverse of all this is sometimes seen. The stubborn and refractory youth, giddy with passion or inexperience, and deluded by ungodly companions, casts from him the bands of parental authority and restraint, and runs wild in every youthful extravagance. The most faithful instructions and earnest exhortation and the best of examples, only serve to awaken to more vigorous action, the evil elements of his character, and to accelerate his passage to ruin. At length, however, when the maturity of manhood has sobered the headstrong rashness of youth, or when sinful indulgence has cloyed the appetite and ruined the man, then does such an one sometimes torn his thoughts seriously upon past scenes. But their remembrance plants daggers in his bosom. The pious counsels of parents and friends, though forgotten during the disordered days of passion, now recur to his memory in all their vividness and power. Is he an agriculturist? He finds himself without property, without industrious habits, and without resolution. Is he a mechanic? Men cannot have any confidence in him and will neglect him: Or is he a student? He sees those who were his companions in youth, and who listened to the voice of their teachers advancing far before him in the road to respectability, usefulness and learning; while he is left in the lowest grade, incapable of great efforts and constituting a mark for scorn,

*To point her slow ummoving finger at.*

He must perceive that his neglect of early instruction is the cause of his disgrace and wretchedness; and full of chagrin and mortification, he will utter the text with a feeling of emphasis.

Such are some of the regrets, in regard to the blessings of this life only, which a retrospect of abused privileges produces. But memory has in store other and keener stings, for the man, who with a proud or giddy contempt, or stupid unconcern, has stood proof against the pressing earnestness of a parent or an instructor's voice, or the voice of the bible, or of the public teacher, pleading with him to be reconciled to God through the Savior. In the former case, he has to regret the loss only of temporal and worldly advantages: but in the latter, he mourns the loss of his immortal soul. He may, indeed, pass on many a year, while memory and conscience are asleep; or, rather, while they are smothered under the rubbish of the world. But they cannot be smothered always; and like a fire long struggling to get vent, when they break forth at last, their rage and ravages will be doubly dreadful. When the hour of sickness comes, and he perceives that ere long he must bid adieu to the world, then all the kind instructions he has resisted will rise in the memory in terrible array, bearing on their front the dreadful inscription, *thou hast destroyed thyself*: you have slighted the accepted time, the day of salvation: you have despised the counsel of God and would none of his reproof: he therefore has left you *to eat of the fruit of your own*

*way, and be filled with your own devices.* All the vain excuses, all the sneering cavils, all the countenance of companions and great names, with which the sinner stifled the voice of conscience in the day of health and prosperity, vanish in a moment, when he finds himself standing on the brink of eternity and the terrific reality flashes in his face. That conscience, which he fancied would never reproach him, he finds to have been a sleeping lion in his bosom, now awakened with hungry fury. He is led to compare his former condition, when in health and surrounded with the means of securing his salvation, with his present state of helplessness and hopelessness: And the bitter memory of his former state weighs down his soul with an insupportable burden.

Amid the lost opportunities that crowd upon the recollection of the despairing man in such an hour, there are always some special seasons, whose remembrance is peculiarly overwhelming. They were seasons when the voice of God addressed him and called him to repentance.

It might have been a day of affliction. Some fond worldly prospect suddenly vanished, or some worldly possession was snatched away, or some dear friend was torn from him by death. Under such a bereavement, his heart was solemnly impressed with the necessity of immediate repentance; and for a time, the bible and the closet were the resort of his soul. But at length these convictions became fainter and fainter, till the warnings of conscience were drowned by the yonder calls of earthly ambition, or glory, or pleasure. Yet after a time, when these objects have disappointed him and left him comfortless, conscience again lifts her reproaching voice and holds before, the man a vivid picture of the precious opportunity he has slighted for securing that good part which could never be taken from him.

But there is a season, which not improved, will be remembered with bitterer anguish in the hour of sickness and death. It is the time when a man is specially awakened by the Spirit of God. Perhaps it was during a revival of religion around him, when an arrow from the quiver of the Almighty reached his heart. A louder voice than ever he had heard before, calls him to repentance. Eternity opens before him with all the distinctness of a sensible object; and as he looks into the holy abode of God and angels, he perceives himself unfit for their society; and as he casts his eyes downwards into the world of woe, he realizes that he must soon sink into its gloomy recesses, unless God, in sovereign mercy, convert him. For he now discovers that *in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing*, and that he has *that carnal mind which is enmity against God*. A thousand motives, therefore, now crowd upon him from heaven above and hell beneath, and urge him to take hold of the righteousness of the Savior. But his proud heart, although on the rack of convictions, refuses submission to the terms of God's appointment. He spurns away from him the Spirit of God, and rushing into the vortex of the world, drowns all his anxiety and fear, and hardens his heart in worldly mindedness or scepticism. But the strong arm of sickness and death breaks at last the delusions in which he slumbers. — And no longer can he hide from himself the cutting recollection of that day, when almighty God specially awakened him from the slumbers of sin and urged him *to make him a new heart and anew spirit*. Now every circumstance connected with that solemn hour comes up fresh in his memory. — The very words that awakened him; the countenance of that Christian friend, or teacher, whose voice *clove to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and proved a discernor of the thoughts and intents of his heart*; that closet, where in the anguish of his heart he poured out his soul in prayer; that praying circle of friends, so solemn and so solicitous for his welfare; that meeting of anxious inquiry, where he met others groaning like himself under the load of sin, and a thousand other circumstances now return upon his soul as if they were again present. And the thought that this opportunity was suffered to pass unimproved, that all these motives were resisted, that the Holy Spirit was insulted, and his warnings disregarded, hangs on his soul with the weight of a mountain,

sinking him down into the depths of despair. For he now fears, and justly fears, that the special call God then addressed to him was the last that he will ever offer, and that in turning a deaf ear to it, he has madly thrown away all heaven and inherited hell as his everlasting portion.

And there is frequently a contrast that increases the bitterness of this retrospect. This sinner remembers others, who were his companions at the period of his convictions, and who were awakened and hopefully converted to God. While he has lived only to harden in sin, he has seen them advancing from year to year in the path to heaven and gradually ripening for eternal glory. These look back upon the same scenes with pleasure, which, to the man who neglected them, appear full of anguish and terrible as Medusa's bristling head. His companions recall with satisfaction all the circumstances of those days when the arrows of the Almighty were within them: For they listened to the voice of instruction and bowed to the will of God; and the wormwood and the gall, which they tasted for a season, were succeeded by the bread of heaven and the water of life. A view of the past, a remembrance of their conversion from the enemies to the friends of Jehovah, inspires them with peace and consolation when they turn their eyes upon the future; and the hope of having *passed from death, unto life* in former days, is an anchor to their souls in the tempestuous hour of dissolution, and enables them to lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draweth nigh. The contrast between these happy souls and his own, awakens in the sinner's bosom, in his last days, the horrors that await him in eternity.

For in truth, this contrast, begun on earth, will, if the grace of God intervene not before death, become wider and wider long as their souls exist. — As the Christian surrounds the throne of God and the Lamb, how sweet will it be to him to look back from his state of security and bliss, upon the scenes of this life, and *remember all the way the Lord led him through its wilderness*. It is delightful to observe how kindly his heavenly Father watched over his steps, and in spite of all his perverseness and resistance, gently compelled him to submit to a Savior; overruled all his sins, so that even these were made to work together for his good, and amid all the assaults of the great adversary and the seductions of the world, spread over him an impenetrable shield, and bringing him unhurt and purified out of every earthly trial, placed him at last in his *presence, where is fullness of joy, and at his right hand, where are pleasures for evermore*.

The fact that this glorious work was all of God enhances in a high degree the pleasures of the retrospect. In heaven the believer perceives more distinctly than ever he did on earth, that his salvation was of *grace through faith, and that not of himself, it was the gift of God*. He perceives that such was the utter alienation of his heart from God, and so riveted its attachment to the world, that nothing but grace could have turned its affections towards heaven. While, therefore, he looks back to the period of his conversion, he rejoices, not as if *by the strength of his own arm he had done it, or by his own wisdom or prudence*; but a sense of the distinguishing love of God in effecting the work, adds a new and a louder note to the heavenly song, *not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory*.

But on the other hand, follow in imagination the man who has neglected or resisted all the reproof or instruction he has received on earth, follow him across the valley of death, and you will witness the consummation of his horrors of conscience. A consummation I say: for however terrible may sometimes be the self-condemning reproofs such an one feels in this world, still, in every case, so long as life remains, there is not an utter destitution of hope. So long as the soul knows not certainly that her eternal doom is fixed, and has not actually heard the voice of God, *swearing that she shall never enter into his rest*, her misery, her darkness, her despair, is not complete. But when the sinner in another

world *lifts up his eyes being in torments*, when he looks round and sees every avenue of belt closed, no more to open, then the last ray of hope vanishes, and the soul sinks at once into a state of utter and unalleviated despair. Conscience BOW seizes her unquenchable torch and marches in horrid triumph through every corner of the soul, painting the scenes of past life with an overwhelming distinctness; and compelling the lost man to commence a work that can never end; the work of retrospection; the work of reviewing his neglected and abused privileges on earth. Could he draw the veil of forgetfulness over the past and shut out the scenes of this life, it would convert hell, if not into heaven, at least, into a state of being that would be tolerable. But memory, more vigorous and active than ever, stamps on every earthly event a new freshness and excites in it a painful interest. Many a text of scripture, many a sermon, many an exhortation, forgotten on earth, is remembered in hell with a dreadful application. Methinks I hear the miserable sufferer repeating over the very sentence that once awakened him. I discern in the countenance of another, the anguish of his soul, as he remembers the pious education he received and the thousand prayers of his parents and instructors in his behalf. I witness the agony of a third, as conscience points him back to a sick bed, or to a painful bereavement, or to a revival of religion.

Such are the recollections, my hearers, that constitute a chief and an unfailing source of misery in the future world of woe. There may be punishments inflicted in that dreadful world by the immediate and direct agency of God; punishments superadded to those which flow out of the very nature of sin. The scriptures may warrant the opinion that such punishments will be brought upon the finally impenitent: But I have no need of them on this occasion. The remembrance of misspent days, of neglected opportunities, and abused privileges, will constitute a hell sufficiently dreadful. -I need no other chains, no other darkness, no other fire, to hold before you, except a reproaching conscience. This is the worm that never dies:—this the fire that never can be quenched: This will harrow up the bosom of the miserable victim, and make it bleed and bleed for ever and ever.

What remains, my hearers, but that the subject be applied.

And if the retrospect of neglected opportunities and slighted instruction constitute a chief source of misery here and hereafter, how important that we improve the privileges we enjoy so faithfully, that their recollection will be welcome to the soul. How delightful and invigorating, when we survey the past, to be enabled to say with an apostle, *our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world*. Frequently, therefore, ought we to pause and solemnly inquire, what improvement we make of those special seasons we enjoy for the acquisition, not only of riches seen and temporal, but also of those unseen and eternal.

And if I may be permitted to make a more particular application of the subject, how can I avoid an exhortation to the members of this Institution, to look back with a scrutinizing eye upon the interesting term which this day closes. It has been a season on which men and angels have looked with a deep anxiety and interest: For they well know how peculiarly momentous it has been in regard to the formation of character. An influence has been abroad, which will be deeply and powerfully felt, not only in time, but in eternity. The instructions of God's word, which have been attended by such a demonstration of the spirit and of power, have not been directed to any in vain. They have accomplished that which God has pleased; and however little it may be realized, they have proved a *savor of life unto life, or of death unto death*.

Are there not some who hear me, whose recollection of this precious season is full of the most pure and joyful associations? Have they not found for the first time a Savior, *the chief among ten thousands and the one altogether lovely*? and are they not about to return, for a time, to the bosom of their friends, carrying with them that pearl of great price, that richest of treasures, that object of so many anxieties and prayers and tears of parents and friends—anew heart? Is not the past term to many, a new and momentous era of their lives—the starting point of a better, a nobler and an endless course—a great moral landmark, to which the mind will ever recur with deep emotion, of feeling and spontaneous thanksgiving to God?

I have no disposition to indulge at this time in gloomy predictions of the apostacy of any of those who have recently had a new song put into their mouths. I need not repeat to them what 'has, no doubt, been impressed again and again upon them, that it is only by a new life that they can give conclusive evidence of a new heart, and that if they fall from the elevated ground they have taken, they fall, like the apostate angels, never to rise again.

But though I predict not apostacy, yet a kind of prophetic feeling urges me to follow in imagination the members of this institution along their future courses. I see them issuing from the shades of science to fill up the places of their fathers in society. I recognize them in the pulpit, on the bench of judicature, and in the hall of legislation. In each of these important and honorable stations, I see them recurring to this scene of their studies. And a glow of deep and pure feeling lights up the countenance of the aged minister of Christ and of the judge on the bench, and of the legislator in the senate chamber, as they recall to mind the lessons of wisdom they received at their Alma Mater: and the very term this day ended, returns upon the memory with all the freshness of yesterday, and all the circumstances of their conversion to God come with a never lessening interest into their minds. And as one after another of those who instructed them drop into the grave, I see these rising up to call them blessed, and to thank God that they were made to obey the voice of their teachers; referring to that obedience, under the blessing of heaven, all their usefulness in life and all their hopes in death. I see them, also, when called to pass through that dark valley, fixing their thoughts again upon this spot, where they learned, not only how to live, but also how to die. And must I contemplate a picture the reverse of this? Must I see any member of this institution not only hating the instructions of human teachers, but blindly resisting the Spirit of God, and after plunging for a few years into the vortex of pleasure and irreligion, pausing at length in his desperate career, and when youth, and health, and virtuous ambition are gone, mourning with bitter regret over opportunities wasted and counsels despised; and while he witnesses those, who are now his companions, filling the most distinguished places of honor and usefulness, he perceives himself to be disregarded and disrespected, exhibiting to the world a melancholy spectacle of moral and intellectual suicide? I shrink from laying open the feelings of such an one, as he totters on the brink of eternity, after a life of uselessness and infamy. In vain does he strive to forget the scenes of youth, and especially the solemn revival season through which he is now passing.— That revival—those instructions, warnings and exhortations he then disregarded, are the prominent circumstances that fill his dying hour with unspeakable horror. How cutting are the reflections that pass through his mind in such a moment! *I have spent my money, cries he, for that which is not bread and my labor for that which satisfieth not.* — Once the voice of mercy and salvation sounded in my ears, and the teachers and friends—nay more—the Spirit of God, called upon me to secure that good part which could never be taken from me. O my Alma Mater! had I improved the instructions I received within your walls, had I followed the example of my companions and given my heart to the Savior, I should not be left in this

dying hour, to these overwhelming regrets and this despair of mercy. O that I could efface the remembrance of that revival! Of what avail was it, but to aggravate my condemnation, that I there learnt to love the works of God, while I remained an enemy to his character. I could admire the glories of the Deity in the wonderful revolutions and mutual relations of the heavenly bodies. I could examine, with eager eye, the opening flower and discover beauty even in the shapeless mineral. I could follow, with raptures, the chemist in his analysis, or the mechanic in his development of the curious laws of motion; and stand delighted while the faculties of my own mind were unfolded: all this could I do, but in the moral character of the God, whose works of nature were so engaging, I could discover no beauty. His noblest work, the work of redemption, was a stumbling block and foolishness, and my heart turned away in disgust from his love and service. Alas! *how have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof! And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!* I have abandoned God and now God has abandoned me. I am left to *eat of the fruit of my own way, and be filled with my own devices. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved!*

And shall we follow such an one beyond the grave? No, my hearers, let the gates of the bottomless pit hide that dreadful world from our view.— For there is enough in the hopeless condition and touching lamentations of such an one in this world, to awaken all the sympathies and to melt the whole heart of piety. Why then should I exhibit the incessant and never ending stabs conscience will make on the soul in the dreary abodes of perdition! Why should I endeavor to paint a scene, from which every ray of light and hope is shut out, and where horror and despair reign sole conquerors amid the blackness of darkness forever!

Permit me to detain you, my hearers, hut one moment more. Though you are now about to separate, probably only for a short time, yet the circumstances already referred to, render that separation peculiarly solemn. The termination of almost every earthly scene is, indeed, affecting; since it reminds us of the close of our probationary course—of the last look we shall cast on all the dear objects around us; and when we separate from our friends, however soon we may hope to meet them again, experience whispers in the ear of every reflecting man, that the next meeting may be at the final judgment. But every friend of God will this day feel a peculiar and deep anxiety, lest the glorious revival of religion, enjoyed in this institution, should now terminate.— And so it will now terminate, Christians, if you forget to watch constantly and to pray without ceasing. Depend upon it, the great adversary will rouse up to a more vigorous onset upon your souls when you separate. He assaulted and overcame our first parent when she was alone. And let none of you, brethren, imagine yourselves more fortified, or less imminently in danger than she. Think of returning hither, only a few days hence, and finding yourselves and this institution abandoned by the special influences of God's Holy Spirit. Think of the return of that careless and worldly spirit, which freezes the heart-blood of religion. Think of the loss of that sweet communion with God, and those holy pleasures you now enjoy: And above all, think of the souls around you yet in the broad road to death. See you not the deep lines of anguish on the countenance, hear you not the deep fetched sigh of their parents and friends, as they meet them returned from this seat of learning, and after all their prayers and tears and exhortations, find their hearts still unsubdued and unsanctified? And can you bear the thought of their returning hither with eyes sealed up in a deeper slumber than ever?

Ah yes! this last day of the term may be the last of their opportunities for securing the salvation of their souls. This may be the very hour in which their eternal doom is fixed. The grieved and insulted Spirit of God may even now be opening his wings to return to Heaven and abandon them forever; and the

recording angel may be writing down the irrevocable sentence of *God, let them alone*. — Then, though they come again to this spot, it will be to them like the dewless mountains of Gilboa. On their foreheads they will bear the curse of the barren fig tree, *let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever*. In vain will they lift up the cry for mercy to the God whose counsel they have despised. The door of mercy is closed—the golden opportunity—the accepted time is past, no more to visit them. — Others may be converted around them; but they will remain like the heath in the desert, parched, and barren, and dead. Like the blasted fig-tree, they will wither away; and after haunting the earth for a time, they will go down to the grave without God and without hope. God in his infinite mercy grant, that such a doom may never fall on any of us; and the praise and the glory shall be given to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit forever:

AMEN.

Delivered

At Amherst College, May 13, 1823

## Sermon 501 Minister's Rule of Duty

[E. Hitchcock, *The Minister's Rule of Duty* (J. S. and C. Adams, Amherst, Mass., 1829)]

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### THE MINISTER'S RULE OF DUTY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED AT THE INSTALLATION

of

REV. FLAVEL GRISWOLD

At South Hadley Canal

December 3, 1828

BY EDWARD HITCHCOCK

Professor in Amherst College

AMHERST

J. S. and C. Adams, Printers, 1829.

Rev. Professor Hitchcock,

*Sir*—In behalf of the South Society in South Hadley, we tender you our thanks for the excellent discourse delivered by you this day, at the Installation of the Rev. Flavel Griswold, as the minister of this Society—and request a Copy for the Press.

Respectfully, Sir, we are yours,  
ENOCH CHAPIN,!      Committee of  
WM. BOWDOIN, Jr.      said Society  
ELI STEPHENSON,

South-Hadley-Canal, Dec. 3, 1828.



## SERMON

## I THESSALONIANS II. 4.

*But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*

It is of high importance that the Christian should possess a fixed standard of duty. Error in the world is so mingled with truth, and sin so often assumes the garb of innocence, or virtue, that we all need some general rule of action—some clew that will conduct us safely through all the mazes of the labyrinth; and enable us *to discern between the holy and the profane—the unclean and the clean*: And, the preacher of righteousness stands in peculiar need of such a scale by which to regulate his life: because his deviations and inconsistencies will be more noticed, in proportion as the path which he pursues is more conspicuous. The private Christian, even if a devoted one, may follow in a comparatively retired and unseen course; but the minister of the Gospel is brought forward on a public theatre, where, if he would, he cannot be obscure. He needs, therefore, some immutable principle of guidance, which is applicable in every situation; and which can direct him, as a faithful compass, in the strait-forward course of duty.

Such a principle is given to us in the text. It is the one by which Paul and his devoted associates regulated their steps. IT IS THE WILL OF GOD. In every diversity of situation, among Jews or Greeks, bond or free, learned or ignorant, friends or enemies, the apostles endeavored to speak and act in such a manner as would please God—the God who judged their hearts.

But Paul here speaks of another rule of action, viz. the will of man. He well knew that the desire to please men, and thereby to promote self interest, is the secret spring that keeps nearly all of this world's votaries in motion. He saw this illustrated in the intrigues and flatteries and hypocrisies of courts, and in the forced kindness and attention of the aspiring demagogue. He saw it on the pages of literature, in the fascinations of the romance and the play, in the music of the poem, and in the partialities and unfaithfulness of the history and the biography; and even in the demonstrations of science. He saw it in the time-serving policy of the political turn-coat, in the courage and professed patriotism of the furious warrior, and in the blustering zeal, or dead formality, of the false teacher of religion. In short, wherever he turned his eyes upon this busy world, he saw the ferment of this leaven:—everywhere, in every rank, the desire to please men was seen to be the secret moving power of human conduct, in spite of every effort to conceal it. But Paul discards such a motive of action with a sort of triumphant abhorrence. It might serve the purpose of the selfish worldling, but not the holy and benevolent purpose of the Christian minister. It demands, however, as the first head of discourse, a few moments examination: and then we shall be better prepared to discuss, in the second place, the superior advantages of making the will of God the sole guide of our actions.

To say in plain terms, that the Christian minister should be entirely guided in his preaching and conduct by a desire to please men, is a statement too gross to be received by any one: and, therefore, it needs no remarks to show the fallacy of such a proposition in its naked form. But the essence of this principle is often urged upon us in another dress, and under a false and deceitful name. The doctrine of

expediency often amounts to nothing more than an effort to please men. We consider that a matter of mere expediency, which does not affect any important principle. It was in this sense that Paul said, *all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient*. He did not mean that it was lawful for him to commit sin, or to neglect the service of God; but only, that in regard to things indifferent, such as were in themselves neither sinful nor holy, but only an occasion of sin or holiness, according to the motives with which they were performed; such as eating certain kinds of meat, and the like: in regard to such things, he might act as expediency, or policy, would suggest. Suppose now a man regards the doctrines of the bible as of not much importance: he will of course consider it a matter of mere expediency, whether the minister preach them: and therefore, if his people dislike them, such a person would urge him, on the principle of expediency, not to exhibit them; or to preach them in such an obscure manner, that they would not be displeasing to the unholy heart. Or suppose a man regards church discipline as of little or no consequence: he will, of course, consider it a matter of expediency merely, whether the minister should enforce it. Now the fact is, that very many in the world, who have loose, and inadequate, and merely speculative ideas of religion, do look upon most of its doctrines, and many of its duties, as things almost indifferent: And hence it is, that ministers of the gospel, who regard these doctrines and duties of vast importance, are often censured for not acting according to the wishes of their people, in respect to these doctrines and duties, when they cannot do it, without a sacrifice of principle and a violation of conscience.

But suppose by what is expedient is meant, *not merely that which promotes our present interest and private gratification, but that which is most conducive to the general happiness of ourselves and others for time and for eternity* (Ed. Encyc. Vol. 13. p. 741. 7): why may not the minister make this kind of expediency the guide of his steps: and surely it ought to please men to promote their best interests. I am willing to admit that such expediency as this, is a real criterion, or test of virtue; and could we apply it, no standard of human duty would be better. For it amounts to the same thing as the will of God: since the promotion of the best and eternal interests of man is a principal object God has in view in all his dispensations towards this world: so that expediency, in this sense, and the will of God, and the glory of God, all coincide. But an abstract criterion of goodness must be carefully distinguished from a practical rule of duty. The fact is, though God can judge of actions by their tendency, man cannot. Because it is not possible for him—a creature of yesterday, who knows nothing—to calculate the remote and possible consequences of his actions. He may sometimes estimate the immediate effects of his conduct, but he can never determine all its remote effects. True, God has revealed to us the general consequences of virtue and of vice, of holiness and unholiness: But the question we are now considering, is, how shall we determine what is virtue, and what is vice:—what is holiness, and what is unholiness. All will admit, that every action, to be virtuous, or holy, must be agreeable to the Divine Will. But some will say, that the way to determine whether any action be agreeable to the Divine Will, is to enquire what will be its effects upon ourselves and others. And it is indeed true, that in all our conduct, we ought to look at the probable effects of our conduct: and in some cases we may have no other method of determining what is the will of God. But we ought always to remember, that all calculations of this sort upon the final tendency of our actions, are liable to great uncertainty; because we cannot see far enough, nor clear enough, to discern all the remote and possible influence and bearing of our conduct. So that where we have any other mode of ascertaining the will of God, (and in most cases we have a more sure word of prophecy, to which we shall do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place;) we ought to suffer the probable effects of our conduct, to exert over us but a feeble influence. Many a minister of Christ, forgetting, it is to be feared, the example of Paul, and modifying

and explaining away the plain commands of God, on account of the dangerous consequences that his imagination painted before him as the effects of complying with their literal meaning, has not merely involved himself in inextricable difficulties, but brought reproach and contempt upon the cause of Christ.

But what, my hearers, would have been the consequence, if the Lord Jesus Christ, if the apostles and martyrs, had acted on this principle of expediency? Christ knew that the effect of his conduct would be, not to send peace on earth, but a sword; that divisions, persecutions and contentions would follow through many centuries; and the apostles found wherever they went preaching the gospel, that bitter divisions and contentions and murders were the consequence of their labors. And what if they had been governed by the doctrine of expediency, and concluded that God could not require of them to do anything so disastrous in its effects. The result would have been, that no atonement would have been made for our sins, nor the gospel ever have been preached in the world. But these devoted laborers kept in mind the express command of God to go forward; and they obeyed, cheerfully leaving the consequences—portentous as they seemed—to that God who would take care of them and of his cause. And he will guide and guard all the successors of Christ and the apostles, who, in this respect, follow their example.

Look for a moment at the perplexity and inconsistency, in which that minister must be involved, who endeavours to shape his course by expediency: who is more anxious to learn the bearing of his conduct upon the world around him, than he is to ascertain the command of God. In many things, indeed, he might act agreeable to the divine will; since in those fortunate cases in which he calculated aright, expediency would not disagree with the will of God. But in many other cases he would go widely, though sincerely, astray from the path of duty, and dishonor God, and obstruct religion, while he supposed himself laboring for its welfare. For even benevolence itself, however sincere and ardent, will do mischief, unless it receive an impulse in the right direction: and not a few deep and painful wounds have been inflicted on the cause of the Redeemer, by many a worthy minister of that Saviour, because they made the arithmetic of expediency their guide, and neglected the plainly revealed command of Jehovah.

Suppose a minister to be placed among a people who sit uneasy under the plain preaching of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. He perceives that they are determined not to hear them advocated; and if he persist in maintaining them, divisions and animosities, and probably the destruction of the society, will be the consequence. He becomes alarmed at the prospect before him, and concludes that expediency will justify him in repressing or smoothing over the offensive truths. He does so: and his society remain united and peaceful; and he mistakes the deceitful calm for a token of the divine approbation. Whereas it is in fact a token of abandonment of God: for the union is but the agreement between religion and sin; and the peace but the sleep of death; the prelude of everlasting agony. Souls are not converted: for it is only the truth that makes men free; and where the truth is not preached, they will remain in bondage. And unless the grace of God intervene, the next generation will witness in such a place, a church that has a name to live, while they are dead; and a people ripe for every error and every sin. Had such a minister recollected that his duty was to preach the gospel, that a necessity was laid on him to preach it, and a woe awaited him if he preached it not, God would have taken care of the consequences, and of his cause, and of his minister.

Another preacher's lot is cast where such a laxity prevails in the lives of the professors of godliness, that he perceives the discipline of the gospel must be applied to purge out the leaven. But a violent

resistance to his efforts appears, and agitates his church and people to the centre. Shall he proceed, or shall he desist? Expediency answers, relax the rigors of discipline and wait for a more favourable moment: for if you proceed, your usefulness is at an end, and the cause of religion will be injured—But the will of God replies: *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.*

Again, it may be the misfortune of a minister to be assailed by those who maintain what he conscientiously believes to be deadly error, but who, nevertheless, demand of him that he should cordially receive them to his fellowship, and acknowledge their claims to the christian character. Expediency will whisper in the minister's ear, if you refuse their demand, the cry of persecution will be raised, and multitudes will be led to embrace their errors, who, otherwise, would remain on the side of truth. It will be better, therefore, to yield a little, since less evil will result from this, than from obstinate - perseverance, which will look like an exclusive spirit. But the word of God thunders in such a minister's ears, *if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed, is a partaker of his evil deeds. Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

Suppose a minister to have no other rule but the will of his people to guide him in his preaching and parochial intercourse; into what a maze of perplexities will he be thrown! One class of his hearers will relish no sermon that is not highly doctrinal, and does not contain the skeleton of systematic theology: Another class demand that nearly all should be practical, keeping the unintelligible mysteries of godliness out of sight. One class are satisfied with nothing that does not make a powerful appeal to the passions, and is not directly calculated to produce strong excitement. Another class can bear nothing that is not measured off and compacted together by the rules of logic. One class look upon it as personal, if the preacher make a searching and pungent appeal to the conscience: Another class are disgusted when he arrays before them, in menacing aspect, the terrors of the Lord. He may find one description of his people dissatisfied, if all his public performances do not bear the marks of talent and hard study, and if their minister do not maintain the character of superior genius and scholarship; and these, of course, would confine him almost incessantly to his study, and leave him no time to go from house to house to learn the state of his people and to testify repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But on the other hand, he may find a still more numerous class, who being themselves unaccustomed to the labour of composition, and scarcely realizing that it is necessary for the minister to give himself to reading, in order to maintain his standing and make improvements, have neither any just sense of the time and effort necessary to prepare for the pulpit, nor of the other retired duties of the faithful minister: and these persons, therefore, would demand of him a much greater share of parochial and social visits than is possibly consistent with other duties. This is particularly true in regard to those who have recently entered the ministry. And not unfrequently such an one, in attempting to satisfy his people, has been compelled to steal many an hour from sleep and devote it to study; and thus has the vigor of his constitution been broken down, succeeded by premature decay and an early tomb. Now, if in regard to all these things I have mentioned, the minister should endeavour to make the will of his people his guide, into what a worse than Cretan labyrinth would he plunge. But let him study to show himself approved unto God, and he has only to *preach the word in season and out of season; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine; endeavoring to give to everyone a portion in due*

*season; and whether he eat or drink, or whatsoever he do, to do all to the glory of God; then will he prove a work man that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

But to dwell no longer on the first part of the subject, I proceed secondly, to suggest some of the peculiar advantages possessed by the preacher, who makes the revealed will of God the guide of his ministrations.

I pause here, however, one moment, to correct a misapprehension, that may possibly exist on this subject. When I picture to you the Christian minister, inflexibly following the will of God in every situation, and remaining unmoved by all the solicitations of man, I fear some will be apt to conceive of such a minister, as a morose, unyielding, monkish ty rant, more fit for the cloister than for society — better adapted for the dark ages of Popery, than for these enlightened times of Protestant liberty. I fear such is the picture many form in their imaginations, of Paul, and the other apostles, when reading their epistles. But it is an unfortunate caricature: for such steady adherence to the will of God, as a rule of duty, tends to make men like God; and God is love. It is perfectly consistent with the utmost kindness and tenderness in the minister towards his people; nay, with a disposition ready to yield in everything not interfering with duty. What affectionate tenderness is manifested by Paul, only two or three verses succeeding the text, which shows him so resolute in following the will God! *We were gentle among you, says he, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls; because ye were dear unto us.* And this is precisely the mild and endearing temper, every successor of of Paul, in the holy office, should cherish towards his people.

The first peculiar advantage the minister possesses, whose standard of duty is the revealed will of God, is, that he is compassed about by a bright cloud of witnesses. I will not here point you, my hearers, to that noble army of angels, who *circle God's throne rejoicing*, and who find in making the will of God their rule of action, an inexhaustible source of happiness. But look at the glorious assembly of prophets, apostles, and martyrs, with the Son of God at their head, and tell me, which of them did not follow, on earth, that same rule, making it the pole star of their conduct? Some of them, indeed, as Moses and Jonah, shrunk, in some instances, from going where God pointed out their path, because it was hedged up with difficulties and dangers: but so far only as they did follow the di vine command, were they accepted. And most of them, for their adherence to that command, fell a sacrifice to the rage of man. The Son of God, the chief among ten thousands, the great exemplar of his ministers, made the principle of the text the grand and universal guide of his life. His meat was to do the will of him that sent him: and in the midst of most appalling dangers, he went forward resolutely in the great work for which he came into the world, unseduced by popular applause and un influenced by popular hatred. Perhaps no one of Christ's disciples exhibited an inflexible determination to follow the will of God in so many trying situations, as the apostle Paul. The annals of romance and tragedy, do not furnish an instance of more deep and affecting interest, or of greater moral sublimity, than the scene that occurred the last time this apostle went up to Jerusalem. His brethren on the way, forewarned by prophecy of the dangers that awaited him in that city, *besought him earnestly not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, what mean ye to weep and to break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.* This same apostle shows how strongly fixed in his mind was the principle of the text, when he says to the Galatians; *Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.* Recollect too the stedfast resolution of Peter and John, when after imprisonment, they were commanded *not to speak at all, nor*

*to teach in the name of Jesus.* Their reply was, *whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.* A like testimony has been left us in the example of a vast multitude of holy martyrs: And it must be peculiarly cheering and sustaining to the devoted minister of Christ, as he stedfastly presses forward in duty, obedient to the divine will, to reflect that he is treading in the path, which so many distinguished and holy servants of God have marked out, and which they found to be the path to the heavenly city.

A second peculiar advantage of making the revealed will of God the standard of duty, is, that this is always a safe and invariable rule. It is safe for the minister, and safe for the people. Following this, he frees himself from their blood: because he has done all in his power to save them. And if God does not bless his labors to their conversion, he would bless no labours among them. But even in such a case, they do not perish because a false or perverted Gospel was preached to them and they were not faithfully warned, but because they would not be saved. So that however unpleasant may be the faithfulness of a minister, who adheres to the will of God as his guide, there is no danger in it; and if the hearers will conform to the preaching of such a man, they will be infallibly secure. Hence they ought to desire in their minister this faithful adherence to the divine will, even though their sins and danger and folly be set in terrifick array before them: and they should dread, as the severest of curses, a man who cries peace, peace, when there is no peace.

The divine will is also an invariable rule: like the author of the Gospel, it is the same yesterday, to day, and forever. The false teacher, and the man who is permitting a calculation of consequences to guide him, will stand upon one course to day, and upon another tomorrow. The compass of expediency is affected by so many local attractions that it never long remains fixed to any one point. Accordingly, the man who takes it for his guide, must move in a course too devious to be described. Indeed, it is much easier to calculate the orbit of a comet, and as easy to trace the course of the nightly meteor, as to determine the path of him who follows any other standard but God's will, as it is revealed in the scriptures. Be there as much piety in such a man's heart as you please, it cannot save him from great inconsistencies of conduct, so long as he turns aside from the light shed on him by the Sun of righteousness, reflected from scripture, and trusts to the guidance of an *ignis fatuus*.

But the man who follows in the plain direction pointed out by the will of God, moves in a right line towards his object—the salvation of souls and the glory of God—two things always united: and there will be a consistency of character in such a man, that will excite the admiration even of his enemies. Fixing his eye upon the great object of his ministry, and grasping the two edged sword of truth, he advances to the combat, and mows a wide and straight path among God's enemies: And though infidelity, and scepticism, and heresy, and all the hosts that are ranged under the banners of sin, may tremble as they see him coming, and rouse in opposition, and strive to turn him aside from the path of duty, yet when he has passed through their ranks, those who are strewed along his course, on the right and on the left, even when smarting under their wounds, will admire the fortitude and consistency of the soldier of the cross, and some of them will arise, be healed by the great Physician, buckle on the gospel armour and follow him.

A third peculiar advantage of adopting the principle in the text, as a rule of duty, is, that it tends to lead the minister to the diligent study of the scriptures. This is the deep and almost exclusive fountain whence he is to drink in a knowledge of what the will of God is. And although the hum blest christian may easily understand the outlines of that system which runs through the bible, yet the most profound

scholar needs to devote the labour of a life to fill up all the shades of the picture and give a finishing to the whole. Scarcely a department of science or literature can be named, that does not, directly or indirectly, throw some light on the scriptures. First on the list stands the linguist, with the thread that unravels the entanglements of idiom, and dialect, and usage. Next comes the historian, lifting up the veil of the past, and bringing to light the events and the customs of dark antiquity. Next approaches the metaphysician, to tell us of the various, and subtle schemes of intellectual philosophy, in the Egyptian, the Grecian, and the Roman schools;—whose opinions are sometimes referred to by the sacred writers. And although the astronomer has no material telescope that can penetrate time, as he penetrates space; yet he is able to turn back the keen eye of calculation and examine and establish the scriptural chronology. To throw light upon the same subject, and to point us to mementos of the deluge, the geologist penetrates the earth and brings forth the evidence of former revolutions and the relics of ancient times. The mineralogist too, can throw a brighter splendor upon the Urim and Thummim, and upon the New Jerusalem; while the botanist can make more lovely, the plants and trees and flowers of Judea. Now the more extensively acquainted, with these various branches of knowledge the minister is, the more capable he is of understanding the scriptures. And whatever incites him forward in researches so wide, and yet so interesting, has a happy influence. True, after his deepest search, he will not find specific rules in the bible for regulating his conduct in every given instance: yet he will find general rules, of so comprehensive a character, that if well understood, he need never be long at a loss to know where lies the path of duty. Alas, that so many, who preach the gospel, should prefer directing their people by the result of their own feeble reasonings, rather than bow to receive their instructions from the book of God. It is like following the light of a rush taper, when the sun is shining in meridian splendour.

A fourth peculiar advantage of making the revealed will of God the rule of duty, is, that it tends to make the minister acquainted with his closet. Al though he has the bible in his hands, yet he reads there of some who are given up to strong delusions to believe a lie that they might be damned. He finds it there taught, that however clearly revealed are the truths of the bible, and however great the talents of a man, yet he will not see, nor embrace those truths, unless his heart be right. And the wide diversities among men, in the interpretation of the bible, confirms this sentiment. Fearful lest his heart should not be right, and lest he should mistake the will of God, through prejudice and corruption, and wrest the scriptures to his own destruction and the ruin of his hearers, he looks often to that God who can preserve him from error and point out to him the way of truth and duty. Indeed, the chief strength of a minister lies in his closet. He may have talents and eloquence; but if these are not warmed and sanctified by secret communion with God, although he may delight and agitate men, and gain popularity, yet he will not convert them. While the feeblest preacher, whose heart is daily kindled up by a fire from heaven, will see religion flourishing under his ministrations. Let that minister who neglects the duties of secret devotion give over all hopes of success: may, let him abandon the hope of his own salvation. The Spirit of God will not accompany his efforts unless he pray for it: And if he do not pray for it, it shows that the Spirit of God has abandoned him.

A fifth peculiar advantage of making the will of God the rule of action, is, that it will keep the minister's thoughts habitually directed to the judgment seat of Christ. For at that bar he will be approved just so far as he has acted agreeable to God's will, and condemned just so far as he has neglected it. If this thought be impressed on his mind, it will accompany him in all his ministerial duties. It will give a solemnity and fervency to every private admonition and exhortation, and to every public prayer,

sermon, or address. And it is this solemn sincerity, this heartfelt earnestness, which carries conviction to the hearts of men.

A sixth peculiar advantage of making the will of God the minister's sole guide, is, that it furnishes an important defence in temptation. I speak here of certain temptations peculiar to the sacred office; and these are neither few nor feeble. A man is established, for instance, among a people whom he loves; and has there laid his plans for spending his days, and provided for the comfortable situation of his family. And besides, if he should be compelled to abandon that situation, he fears he should be cast a houseless wanderer upon the world. But at length he begins to perceive that the faithful preaching of the gospel gives offence, and error is clamorous in its demands upon him to relax his discipline, and be more tolerant in his feelings. In short, he finds that unless he does relax in his faithfulness, he will soon be abandoned and dismissed. Alas, so strong is the temptation to yield to the attack and abandon the ark of God to his enemies, that unless one eye be constantly fixed on the divine commands, and the other on the judgment day: unless he keep up a constant intercourse with heaven, his fears will triumph over his faith, and he will cease to cry aloud, and sinners will cease to be converted. At such a time it is peculiarly important that he look exclusively on the divine will: for if he suffer himself to speculate about expediency, satan will get an advantage of him, and he will inflict a blow on the cause of Christ, which centuries cannot repair. And alike powerful in giving strength to the fainting heart and desponding faith, is this rule of action, under all the temptations to which Christ's ministers are exposed.

Finally, this same principle is peculiarly important in time of difficulty and trial. Were the minister to pass through no severe seasons of this character, he would hardly regard himself a successor of the apostles. But alas, they are planted thick enough along his path, however cheering may be the commencement of his course; and it would be folly to expect an exemption. He is sometimes called to witness his people, in spite of all his efforts, waxing worse and worse; a death like stupor settling upon his church, and sin rioting without fear and without shame among the irreligious. Peculiarly fortunate is it for him at such a period, if he can look back and reflect that his conduct has been directed by the divine will: for then the blood of his people rests upon their own heads; and although he will be pained to see them rush upon destruction, yet will he not fear that he is the cause of their ruin. Times of difficulty and perplexity also sometimes occur in a church, when the fate of the whole body, and of the society in which it is placed, seems to depend upon the course taken by its pastor. Oh let every people, at such a juncture, be delivered from the man, who has nothing surer to guide him, than the uncertain calculations of expediency! But if the revealed will of God be his directory, he need not fear for the church, nor for himself. The faithful minister may likewise be called to feel the deep stabs of ingratitude from some among his people. The more solicitous he is for their salvation, the more are they alienated from him, and embittered towards him. They hate his doctrines—they hate those duties he inculcates; and throw every bar in their power in the way of his success. Now how shall he act towards such? Let Paul answer: *I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.* Oh, this is an elevated state of Christian feeling: but it ought to be attained by every one set for the defence of the gospel. Yet if a man has regulated his conduct by a desire to please men, how is it possible he should reach this state of feeling towards such? But if the will of God has been his guide, he will look to God for his reward; and can cheerfully go on, laboring for the good of those, who are laboring for his ruin. Thus will he overcome evil with good, and heap coals of fire on the heads of his enemies.



In conclusion of the subject, I remark, first, that the principle, advocated in this discourse, takes away from the faithful minister, a vast load of distressing responsibility. *Duties are ours, events are God's*: how much is contained in that sentence! If a man were answerable for all the consequences of faith fully preaching the truth, who would dare ever to preach it! Amid the thousand difficulties that sometimes hedge up the minister's way; under the dark and lowering cloud that sometimes settles on his prospects; borne down by a sense of his own weakness and sinfulness, and beholding the wide wasting mark of sin and error around him, surely he must sink in despair, if he were to judge of his faithfulness, or reward, by his success. But possessed of the consciousness of having firmly adhered to the command of Jehovah, he can go cheerfully forward amid every discouragement: though ten thousand evils cluster around him; come what will come; sheltered under this principle, he knows he is safe, and the church is safe, and heaven is safe.

Secondly. If the minister must make the will of God his sole guide, then how important is it that he keep ever before him, the grand and leading object God has in view in the institution of the ministry; viz. the promotion of his glory in the salvation of sinners! In attaining this most magnificent and glorious object, God has made the minister an instrument: and the grandeur, and sublimity, and unspeakable importance of it, ought to carry him above the low atmosphere of human passions, and make him indifferent to human applause or censure, any farther than these will promote or retard the great work. He professes to be actuated by a higher principle than this world's morality, or this world's philosophy, ever discovered. Let him, therefore, maintain an elevated and consistent course, with the word, and the will, and the judgment of God in his eye. It does not belong to him to descend into the arena of this world's contests; unless it be <sup>to</sup> bid the combatants no longer to strive with flesh and blood, but henceforth to *wrestle with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places*. It is not for him to employ weapons *that are carnal, but those that are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds*. It is not for him to act upon the juggling and pliable principles of this world's votaries: but the love of Christ should constrain him; and there should be a sort of transparency in his character, that will make it obvious to the world, that the will of God is his guide, and the glory of God his object. Then may he reasonably hope that his labour will not be in vain; and that the souls of those for whom he strives and prays, will become gems in his eternal crown.

May such be your rule of action, my dear brother; such your elevated and consistent course, and such its termination among this people. You know what the will of God is in sending you hither; viz. to labor for their salvation; for *he will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*. This is the grand object you should keep continually before you; and to promote it, may your hands ever be strong and active, your heart warm, and your soul steadfast. Does your heart sink in view of the responsibilities you this day assume Look up to the everlasting hills whence cometh your help, and remember that you can do all things through Christ strengthening you. Do you fear that your love of souls is weak in comparison with their value \* Then turn your eyes, my brother, upon this people, who have chosen you for their spiritual guide. Look at this church, waiting, as I trust, with praying hearts, to be taken by the hand and led into the green pastures and by the still waters of salvation. Look at those descending into the vale of years, and those in the meridian of life, whose hearts have never been warmed by the love of a Saviour; and say, does there not rise within you, a holy ambition, to be the instrument of plucking them as brands out of the burning: Look too upon this rising generation, and see them stretch out to you their hands, and committing themselves to your guidance, tell you, that their eternal destiny depends upon your faithfulness. O, I know your heart burns to make them heirs of glory. And finally, if

there be wanting yet a motive to faithful ness, lift up the eye of faith and look to the recompense of reward. —

Thirdly. If ministers must make the will of God their guide, then ought their people to listen to the messages they bring, as those who must give an account. It is clearly implied in the text, that if ministers please God, they will not always please men. And such Paul found to be the fact: and so did the Saviour; and so have their faithful successors. It is the minister's business to convince men that they are alienated from God, and living in opposition to his laws, and that they must be reconciled to him, or perish. But these are most mortifying truths; aiming a fatal blow at human pride; and it is no wonder that men unacquainted with themselves, should revolt at the painful representation. It is also the minister's duty, sometimes, to show to those who profess godliness, that they *have a name to live, but are dead*; and this, to such, is scarcely more welcome. But let people recollect, when thus excited to complain, that ministers are not to be judged by the maxims of worldly prudence and etiquette. The rule they profess to follow is the will of God, as contained in the word of God. To the word of God, therefore, they appeal: and *if they speak not according to to this word, it is because there is no life in them*, and they are willing to be condemned. But if they go not beyond the sacred record, then should their hearers take heed, both how they hear, and what they hear. *For Christ has said to his faithful ministers, he that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Why do we send for a physician when sick? That he may exert himself to save our lives and recover our health: nor do we become irritated and offended, because he administers to us unpleasant remedies; or performs some painful operation, which he declares necessary to our recovery. And why do men settle ministers over them? That their souls may be saved; that their spiritual sicknesses may be healed: And yet, when the minister perceives their malady to be too deeply rooted to yield to milder remedies, and finds it necessary to probe their consciences, and to lay open their hearts, by the sword of the Spirit; how very apt are they to feel as if he were unnecessarily severe, and took delight in distressing them, and in dealing out their condemnation. They urge the physician of their bodies to let them know the worst of their case: but they would have the physician of their souls heal their wounds slightly, and say, peace, peace, when there is no peace. True, the preacher, if his heart be not right, may mix with the word of God his own spleen and venom; and thus render the truths of the gospel—offensive enough at the best to the natural heart—still more repulsive. But as I said before, let him be tried by the word of God and by this only. When he endeavours to fix upon the unregenerate man the charge of entire native depravity and enmity to God, let the bible be searched to see if it does not make a similar charge. When he presses the necessity of a renewing of the holy Ghost upon such, and in spite of their depravity, urges upon them their obligations to immediate repentance, let them inquire of Nicodemus whether Christ did not teach the same. When he exhibits the atoning blood and righteousness of Christ, as the sinners only hope for pardon, and justification, let them inquire of the Romans and Galatians, whether Paul did not do likewise. When he insists upon a holy life, as indispensably necessary to accompany faith, let not an antinomian spirit cry out against him, until it is sure the same charge will not lie against Paul and James. When he represents God as having mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardening whom he will, before he is condemned, let the epistles of the great apostle of the gentiles, be read with prayer. When he represents the future punishment of the wicked to have the same duration as the happiness of the righteous, let them read the 25th chapter of Matthew, and they cannot condemn him. When he exhibits the glorious union of Father, Son, and Spirit, in the Godhead, let them not object, until this great mystery of godliness can be expunged from the bible. And when he holds up the love of the world as a most dangerous idolatry, and makes the most

solemn and urgent appeals to everyone, to seize upon the passing moment to make his peace with God, let them resolve to comply, or reject the authority of the bible. Finally, let them remember that the day is at hand, when all that the minister has preached will be reviewed: and if he be found to have followed the will of God, every part of his message that was rejected, will hang like a mill stone upon the necks of his hearers.

It is these leading doctrines and duties, my Christian hearers, which we trust will be woven into the sermons and addresses of the man of your choice, who is now to be set over you in the Lord. These will form the grand starting point of his ministrations: the broad and deep foundation on which he will strive to build up the spiritual house of God in this place. And when we urge him, on this occasion, to keep his eye fixed, in this great work, on the the pleasure of God, and not on the pleasure of man; when we bid him fearlessly follow the will of God, though it involve the sacrifice of every person al or relative blessing; though it array this whole people against him; do we seem to any to under value, or treat with negligence, your interests Ah my hearers, well do we know that if your minister follow the will of God, your best interests will be infallibly secured. Well do we know, that they could not be promoted by any other course. And from my knowledge of his character, and of this people, may I not predict that a blessed result will at tend this union \* Already has God given to you, what I would fain believe to be an earnest of still greater spiritual blessings. May I not hope, may I not predict, that the converting and sanctifying influences of his Spirit, with which he has so abundantly blessed the incipient labours of your pastor elect, will continue to be granted after the ministerial relation is consummated may I not hope, that this church, impressed with its high obligations to God, and constrained by love to Christ, will, with one heart and soul, continue to compass the altar of the Most High, to plead for still greater blessings upon this place | Is it fancy, or do I see this church in time to come, resolving not to settle down contented with the low standard of ordinary attainments, but to be ever pressing upwards, and setting a bright and most influential example to all around! Do I not see them affording a most prompt and efficient support, by their prayers and self denying efforts, to every exertion of their minister for the salvation of souls! Do I not see this church filled to overflowing, not with those who have a name to live while they are dead; but with humble, firm, warmhearted, enlightened disciples! Do I not see—God grant it may not be false prophecy—do I not see this place distinguished above almost every place, by containing an overwhelming majority of devoted followers of Christ; and showing how happy, how blessed, is a community, which is brought fully under the influence of Christian principles. Should such be the result of this day's solemnities, when you, my hearers, and your minister meet in the eternal world, - O what joys, O what glories, await you there!

Delivered

At South Hadley Canal, December 3, 1828

## Sermon 502 The Inseparable Trio

[E. Hitchcock, *The Inseparable Trio* (Dutton and Wentworth, Boston, Mass., 1850)]

Text extracted from pdf available on Google Books at:

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### THE INSEPARABLE TRIO

A sermon delivered before  
His Excellency George N. Briggs, Governor  
His honor, John Reed, Lieutenant Governor,  
The Honorable Council And the Legislature of Massachusetts  
At the Annual Election  
Wednesday, January 2, 1850  
by Edward Hitchcock, D.D., LL.D.  
President of Amherst College  
Boston  
Dutton and Wentworth  
State Printers  
1850

### COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

House of Representatives, January 3, 1850.

ORDERED, That Messrs, Farwell, of Cambridge, Dickinson, of Amherst, and Southworth, of Williamstown, be a committee to present the thanks of the House to the Rev. Edward Hitchcock, D. D., for the able discourse delivered by him yesterday, before the Government of the Commonwealth, and to request a copy thereof for publication.

CHARLES W. STOREY, CLERK.

## SERMON

PSALM, xxxiii, 12

*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, (Jehovah)*

ISAIAH, v, 13

*Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge.*

JOHN, viii, 36.

*If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

An important reciprocal influence has ever been admitted to exist between Religion, Education, and Freedom: but their inseparable connection and mutual dependence have rarely been maintained or demonstrated. If that can be done, the present is surely an appropriate occasion for attempting it. Such, therefore, is the theme which I shall present to this highly respected audience.

The position taken on this subject is this: RELIGION, EDUCATION, AND FREEDOM, ARE INSEPARABLE, AND MUTUALLY DEPENDENT.

It will give, perhaps, a clearer idea of this general proposition, if it be divided and illustrated.

First, then, true Religion, an enlightened system of Education, and genuine Freedom, form the three great vital centres of the Social System; just as the Brain, the Heart, and the Lungs, are the centres of life in the Animal System. Nor can you separate these centres from one another in the one case, any more than in the other, without destroying them all. Without a brain to give sensibility and motion, there would be no beating heart, or heaving lungs. Without a heart to propel the blood through the brain and the lungs, the latter would collapse, and the former would be paralyzed. And did not the lungs oxygenate and purify the blood, it would prove a deadly poison to the brain and the heart; and no vital warmth would be imparted to the frame. So in the social system, were there no religion to give sensibility to our relations to God and our fellow men, and to lead us to act from higher motives than atheism or pantheism could inspire, education, in its legitimate and liberal meaning, would never exist; nor could freedom be enjoyed: since, without the purifying and elevating influence of religion, the strong would oppress the weak, and keep them in hopeless servitude. So if education were stricken from the social system, religion would degenerate into formalism, or fanaticism; and freedom would soon be drowned in licentiousness, or crushed by an iron despotism. And if freedom were to be smothered, religion would lose its vitality, and become a mere tool of ambition; and education would be ostracised as a dangerous agent; at least in the hands of the people at large.

Secondly, no one of these vital centres of the social system can be in health and vigorous action, if the rest are diseased, or palsied. For such is their mutual sympathy, that just so far as one is defective, or its vitality lowered, by an admixture of erroneous principles, will the others be crippled and benumbed. In the animal system, if disease has attacked the brain, we expect, not only that the mind will be oppressed, or act irregularly and wildly, but that the lungs and the heart will partake of the disordered movement. In like manner, if disease or poison be operating upon the heart, or the lungs, we cannot depend upon the healthy action of the brain and the mind. And the degree of irregularity existing in one of these vital organs, is the index of the derangement in the others. Just so, if in any country, a false or defective system of religion prevails, we may be sure to find corresponding deficiencies and errors in its system of education and its principles of liberty. In like manner, if we find its inhabitants ignorant, we can safely infer that its religion is proportionably erroneous, and its freedom defective. And if the liberties of a country have been usurped by the despotism of the many, or of the few, we may be sure that in the same ratio, its religion will be corrupt and its plans of education imperfect.

Such is my explication and elucidation of the general principle advanced. I may seem to have taken strong ground; but I trust it can be maintained by an appeal to REASON, to the BIBLE, and to EXPERIENCE. I proceed, therefore, to defend my position by evidence drawn from these three sources.

Preliminary to this argument, however, let me say, lest my positions should be misunderstood, that in maintaining the inseparable connection and mutual dependence of these three pillars of a nation's glory and strength, I do not contend that they are equally important. It will be universally admitted that the brain, the lungs, and the heart, are inseparably connected and mutually dependent. But who does not know that the brain occupies a place, and executes functions in the system, of preeminent importance? The influence that emanates from it, along the conducting nerves, causes the heart to beat and the lungs to heave: in fact, all the phenomena of vitality depend upon it; and so, in the present world, do the far more wonderful phenomena of intellect. But it is nevertheless true, that disordered action in the heart, or the lungs, will impair the functions of the brain; so that we infer a mutual dependence; while at the same time we assign the highest place, and by far the most commanding influence, to the brain.

In like manner, in the social system, no observing and reasonable man will hesitate to place religion at the head of all those influences by which the public good is promoted, the national character formed, and its destinies shaped. Moral obligation is the only power that can give genuine life and regulated action to a nation's energies: and if that do not send its galvanic shocks into the whole system, not only will education and freedom fail of vitalization, but paralysis will seize upon the whole body politic; - except that occasionally a convulsive agony, the symptom of approaching dissolution, may rack its frame and distort its features. Highest and foremost, therefore, we place religion among the influences that determine a nation's character; although an important reflex influence upon religion, from education and freedom, must be admitted.

It may be desirable to state another preliminary explanation. In maintaining the mutual dependence of these three great Institutions of the social economy, so that when one fails or is crippled, the others suffer the same fate, it should be remembered that we speak of the community as a whole, and not of individual exceptions. For such exceptions may exist, of a striking character. The prevalent system of religion may be very corrupt, and yet, there may be found, bright and beautiful examples of individual piety. So there may exist many splendid, examples of scholarship, where the masses are profoundly ignorant. And even under the gloomy sway of despotism, individuals may be found, enjoying a high

degree of personal independence. But single exceptions of this sort cannot invalidate conclusions based upon tendencies and results, which are generally the same, and whose failure is only as one to a thousand.

But what do we mean by the term Religion? Simply, I answer, the unadulterated system taught in the Bible, and illustrated perfectly in the life of the Founder of Christianity, and imperfectly, yet often beautifully, in the lives of those followers Of Christ, who have been eminent for their self-denying labors and vigorous faith.

And what do we mean by Education? Not a system that provides for the gigantic scholarship of a favored few, while the many are left under the cloud of ignorance. But a system that carries the torch of science through every portion of the community, offering it to all as freely as the day light, and opening the path for the poorest and the humblest genius to find his way to the summit of Parnassus.

And what do we mean by Freedom? Not liberty for a few, or even a majority, while a large portion of the community are cut off from its blessings: Not liberty for the whole without restraint: Not that reckless liberty, which abolishes all the salutary distinctions of society, founded on talents, character and office, and levels everything downwards, till all are sunk to the lowest grade. But we mean such a degree of chastened liberty, as experience has shown most conducive to individual happiness and the public good.

From these explanations I turn now to the evidence of the general position, that Religion, Education, and Freedom, are inseparable and mutually dependent: I make my first appeal to REASON; in other words, to the NATURE OF THE CASE. The problem is this: Knowing the character of man, and the nature of Religion, Education, and Freedom, does reason alone, irrespective of scripture and experience, afford a presumption in favor of the proposition or against it? Reasoning a priori, should we conclude these three leading institutions of the social system to be mutually dependent, and so connected that diseased action in one shall be communicated to all the rest?'

In order to obtain a satisfactory answer to these enquiries, let us make a series of suppositions.

Let us, in the first place, imagine that Religion is stricken from this trio: can Education and Freedom long survive?

To live without religion, is to be destitute of all sense of moral obligation to God, or our fellow men; and to be free from all influences and sanctions drawn from a future state of retribution. In such circumstances we need not resort to any theological dogma to show that supreme selfishness would be the con trolling law of life, and consequently, that every man would strive to gain as much power, and distinction, and property as possible. But the more talented and discerning few, would soon discover, that in proportion as the mass of men were enlightened and free, would be the difficulty of gratifying their selfish de sires. While, therefore, they might encourage education and freedom among a favored few, they would try to keep the many ignorant and in servitude. This is in fact, the very process that has been acted over a thousand times in the history of our globe. The masses must be kept ignorant and degraded, or the few cannot monopolize the power, wealth, and influence, which selfish nature urges them to seek after with irresistible impulse. To root out religion, then, is to aim a death blow at education and free dom.

Let us next suppose a nation to be blessed with Religion and Freedom, but without Education. Can she long retain the former?

Although the great principles and precepts of religion are simple, they are liable to be misunderstood and misapplied, if the intellect be uncultivated. Individuals quite ignorant, may become devotedly pious, in a community where there are intelligent men to instruct them. But if the vast majority are unlettered, religion will almost inevitably lose its power, beneath a multitude of external ceremonies, or run wild with fanaticism. For these extremes are more fascinating to the ignorant mind, than the unostentatious piety of the heart, because accompanied by more external glitter and noise. 'Besides, it is much easier for a heart in love with sin, to practice pompous rites and ceremonies, or to cry out with Jehu, come and see my zeal for the Lord, than to carry on a daily warfare with sin within and without, and to set an example of charity, humility, and self-sacrifice. Hence it is, that in an ignorant community, religion never fails to degenerate into formalism, or fanaticism; and not unfrequently the two have been united.

No less essential is intellectual cultivation to the support of genuine freedom. Men must understand its principles, or they will either become the dupes, and ere long the slaves, of unprincipled ambition, or they will mistake licentiousness for liberty, and soon be glad to take refuge in the despotism of one from the despotism of many.

Imagine next, that a nation is blessed with Religion and Education, but has lost its Freedom. Can the former flourish under an arbitrary government?

Tyrants are usually eagle-eyed to discover any influences that are hostile to their usurped prerogatives. Now, the whole system of the Bible aims a fatal blow against all unrighteous authority, both because it brings all men on a level before God, and because it shows such authority to be hateful in his sight. Hence despotic power will not be satisfied till it has robbed Christianity of its vitality; and, alas! it has usually found a venal priesthood, ready to perform the mummifying process.

An enlightened system of public education is almost equally hostile to arbitrary power, as is Christianity. In fact, you cannot enlighten the people, generally, without teaching them their true character, and showing them that God made them to be free. Either, therefore, the power of the tyrant or education, must fall; and the same agency which he has employed to embowel Christianity will be ready to obliterate the primary school, and petrify the college and the university.

These suppositions sustain, I trust, the first part of the general proposition, that religion, education and freedom are inseparable. But the second part maintains that there is such a connection and sympathy between them, that to mar and deteriorate one is to impart what the chemist would call a catalytic influence to all the rest, whereby they shall be degraded and become impure. To show this will require a parallel series of suppositions; and yet, by an appeal to history, we might convert these assumptions into facts. But that belongs to my third argument.

We will suppose the religion of a nation to become corrupt, either by the introduction of false doctrines, or the substitution of external forms for the piety of the heart, or by an amalgamation with the world. Now, unadulterated Christianity is a stern advocate for the most liberal system of education; both because it courts the most rigid scrutiny, and because, without intelligence in the community, its plain and honest features would soon be buried, and its vitality smothered, beneath the meretricious ornaments of formalism, or burnt over and blackened by the fires of fanaticism. But a corrupt system of religion dreads a pure system of education, lest its hypocrisy should be detected. It knows very well that education must be so modified as not to admit of freedom of discussion or freedom of opinion; and that the great body of the people must be kept in comparative ignorance, or they will not submit to the



trammels of a perverted Christianity. And, therefore, it will be hostile to any system of education that is not clipped and moulded to conform to its own degraded standard.

Equally jealous of freedom you will find every false system of Christianity. Religious liberty, especially, cannot be tolerated; for, in such a case, the perversions of the truth, made by an unholy priesthood, or designing politicians, would soon be exposed, and then resisted. Uncomplaining conformity to the prevailing system, is the imperious demand of every corrupt religion. And since nearly every such system links itself with the state, it can enforce conformity; if not, at this day, by swords and faggots, yet by the almost equally powerful engines of governmental favors and disabilities. Hence, to pervert Christianity is to put a muzzle upon the mouth of freedom.

Suppose a defective system of education to prevail in a country; one, for example, where the majority of the people are uninstructed, and only the wealthy and aristocratic have access to the fountains of knowledge. The almost inevitable result would be, that the educated few would encroach upon the rights of the ignorant many; while the cunning priest would easily exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that, as God, he would sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God, and thus persuade the multitude that they must go to him for pardon and life eternal, instead of Jehovah.

Or suppose arbitrary power to have gained the ascendancy, where the people are well instructed, and pure religion prevails. In such a case, we may calculate upon one of two results. Either religion and education would teach the people rebellion, - for there can be no doubt but both of them are decidedly hostile to arbitrary power, - or the usurpers would contrive to infuse a narcotic influence into the pulpit, to close the primary school, and to render the press venal.

From the known selfish and ambitious character of man, therefore, and the admitted sympathetic influence between Religion, Education and Freedom, does not reason decide that to obliterate one is to destroy the rest? and to corrupt one is to sink the others to the same condition? In support of these positions, I make my second appeal to the Bible.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the grand object of the Bible is to instruct us in religion; and no other subjects are mentioned, except as incidentally connected with this. We ought not to expect, therefore, that we shall find the general proposition which we are discussing, stated in so many words. Its leading features, however, I think we can find asserted and defended, directly or indirectly.

The Bible shows us, for instance, how indispensable to a nation's happiness and glory is true religion. The passage first named at the head of this discourse, - Happy is the nation whose Goal is the Lord, - is an example. It does not say that such would be the effect of acknowledging and serving any other God except Jehovah, the God of the Jews; for so it is in the original. The poet would make no difference between *Jehovah, Jove, and Lord*

But the Bible declares, that *though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, to us there is but one God, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* It is the service and love of that one God only, through that one Lord Jesus Christ, that can render a nation happy. That God declares that *He is a great king over all the earth; a governor among the nations;* and he challenges their love and service. *Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.* He goes farther, and declares the consequence of

disobedience. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant it: - If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them. - If they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord.*

Thus does the Bible represent true religion as preeminently important to a nation's happiness. It also declares knowledge to be essential to the preservation of freedom and religion. The second text named at the head of this discourse teaches this, at least in part. - Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge. Here the loss of liberty is ascribed to ignorance; and this, as we have seen, corresponds with reason, and, as we shall see, with experience also. In another place it is said, *For the transgressions of a land, many are the princes thereof; - that is, frequent changes and revolutions occur; - but by a man of understanding and knowledge, the state thereof shall be prolonged: - that is, its prosperity shall be lengthened out.* Again, it is said, *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee.* Again, *Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation.*

If it be objected that the term knowledge, in the scriptures, usually means religious knowledge, and, therefore, does not embrace modern science and literature, whose acquisition is the chief thing in what we call education, it may be answered, first, that the term knowledge, in such texts as have just been quoted, did embrace every kind of intellectual acquisition that entered into the Jewish system of education; of which, however, religion constituted nearly the whole. Again, who will deny that the religious applications of modern science and literature constitute their most important use? Nay, what principle of science (and of literature we may say nearly the same,) does not afford some illustration of the divine character, or government, or of man's moral relations, and may not, therefore, be properly called a religious truth? Furthermore, it will be confessed that the moral and religious teachings and applications of modern education are precisely the principles that are the most important to the preservation of a nation's freedom and happiness. So that what the Bible says of the bearings of knowledge and of ignorance upon a nation's destinies may be applied to the most valuable and perfect system of modern education.

But the Bible proceeds a step farther, and shows us what is the character of the man who is most perfectly fitted to the exercise and enjoyment of freedom. This is pointed out in the third passage prefixed to this discourse: *If, therefore, the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* That is, if the transforming power of the gospel has been exerted upon a man, so that he has become free from the power of sin, he is every whit free, - a freeman of the Lord, - fitted rightly to appreciate and become a champion of civil liberty. The Jews resented the imputation of Christ that they were not free, and said, *We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?* *Jesus answered them, verily, verily, I say unto you, whoso ever committeth sin is the servant of sin.* Till that chain be broken, he cannot be truly free; as the poet has finely expressed it:

*He is the freeman, whom the truth makes free, And all are slaves besides.*

Finally, in the organization of the Christian church, as exhibited in the Bible, we have a divine testimony to the intimate connection between Christianity, Freedom and Education. It seems difficult to read the inspired history of the establishment of the church impartially, without coming to the conclusion that it was a pure democracy, or rather, its government seems to be what may be called a Theocratic Democracy; by which I mean, a government of the people, and yet they are governed by the law of God, and their administration consists mainly in carrying out the divine law. Each church consisted of brethren, with equal rights. They elected their own pastor and deacons, disciplined their own members, settled their own difficulties, and were independent of other churches, except so far as they asked for advice. The pastors, too, were all equal, save so far as age, talents, or superior piety, gave any the precedence. I do not say that all christian churches, in all circumstances, are required to be organized on such a republican model. The Jewish church, - synonymous with the Jewish nation, - was a theocracy; and I sincerely respect the opinion of eminent men, who have thought the diocesan and metropolitan forms of church government the best for men in other circumstances. I sincerely respect that opinion, I say, so long as they base it upon expediency, and not upon the Bible. That book certainly describes the primitive church, established by Christ and his apostles, as an institution thoroughly democratic; and is not this a strong testimony in favor of free civil governments? especially when they, and they alone, harmonize with the whole spirit of Christianity, which regards all men as brethren of a common Father. Indeed, though the Bible directs Christians to obey whatever rulers Providence may have placed over them, so long as they are tolerable, yet where has it given a testimony in favor of any other, except a free government?

In the characteristics both of the members and the ministers of the church, which the Bible has given, we find, also, a testimony in favor of education, as essential to the purity of religion and freedom. It demands, first of all, an intelligent and rational submission, of intellect and heart, to the authority and will of God; and then it directs believers to *prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good*, - a requisition impossible to a mind entirely uneducated. Then, too, if we read Paul's descriptions of the ministerial character, especially in his epistles to Timothy, we shall see a demand for a very thorough mental discipline. Even under the old dispensation, it was said that, *the priests' lips should keep knowledge*. We are not, then, surprised to hear Paul exhorting Timothy, *to give attendance to reading, as well as to exhortation and doctrine*, also, *to meditate on these things, and to give himself wholly to them, that his profiting might appear to all; and that he might make full proof of his ministry*. Surely, nothing but thorough literary discipline could qualify a man for such a work. Theology, the noblest of all sciences, is but the quintessence of them all; and he only who has studied them can extract and condense it.

Is it not clear, then, that the Bible, while it places religion immeasurably above everything else, does yet, directly, or by fair implication, strongly advocate the most enlarged system of education, and the purest form of national freedom? And does it not represent the absence, or defects, of the two latter, to be fatal or injurious to the former?

But I make my third appeal, in support of this position, to Experience; by which I mean history. And here the difficulty is not to find appropriate examples, but to make selections.

Let us first look at some examples where attempts have been made to sustain one or more of the institutions under consideration, while the rest were wanting.

The ancient Jewish state was an example, where the religious system, so far as it was developed, was pure, but the education was defective. Excepting a knowledge of their own history and religion, there was almost nothing that could be called literature or science; and the views of the body of the people were very narrow and bigoted. Mark, now, some of the effects. One was, that in spite of the awakening power of a miraculous dispensation, and the repeated warnings of Jehovah himself, and their strong national pride, they were almost constantly falling into the idolatry of the surrounding nations. Another was, that Jehovah found it desirable, out of regard to what the scriptures I call the *hardness of their hearts*, to allow certain practices among them, which most enlightened nations shrink from; such as polygamy, slavery, and bloody wars. Another effect was, that instead of allowing them freedom, it was necessary often for Jehovah not only to suffer them to have kings, but such kings *as would chastise them with whips and scorpions*. And notwithstanding all the wisdom of Jehovah, in managing their national affairs, and his mercies, judgments, and warnings, at the time of Christ they had become a province of the Roman empire, and their religion had degenerated into the whited sepulchre of phariseism, or the yet more repulsive carcass of sadduceism.

Look now at an opposite example, in the effort made in France, near the close of the last century, to establish freedom and education without religion. It was like an attempt to erect a noble edifice, without any foundation. It was worse; it was like placing such an edifice upon ground that was already rocking and heaving by the stifled fires of a terrific volcano. The fires of ferocious passions, fanned into a seven fold heat by the sirocco breath of atheism, did soon break forth beneath that temple of liberty, and it was blown to atoms; while streams of scorching lava were belched forth over every European nation, and the gloom of a military despotism settled down upon the fairest portion of the globe; the whole forming a memento of the terrible retribution that follows an effort to dethrone God and deify human reason.

Another fact which history furnishes, illustrative of this subject, is the intimate connection that has ever existed between despotism, ignorance, and false or perverted religion, - *par nobile fratrum*. I am not aware of a single exception, in the whole annals of our world; and where the tyranny has been the most grinding, the religion has been the most corrupt, and the ignorance the most profound. As illustrations of this statement, in ancient times, memory shows imprinted on her tablet, Assyria and Media, Persia and Egypt; in the middle ages, almost the whole of Europe; and, in modern times, nearly all of Asia; over whom the triple-headed monster, above named, is seen enthroned in gloomy sovereignty, - a snaky Gorgon, converting everything fair and lovely to stone by his hideous aspect. On such a soil, true religion, or popular education, or true freedom, could no more flourish than the palm tree on the glaciers of Spitzbergen.

It will doubtless be objected, that despotic governments have often been liberal patrons of learning and of art, and that countries thus governed, have produced many splendid examples of genius and scholarship. And why has this patronage been extended? Because such governments have learnt that knowledge is power; and so long as it is confined to comparatively few, they can monopolize it, and make it instrumental in upholding their authority. But they would not dare to extend its blessings to the community at large, because their power would be apt to change hands. Accordingly, we do not find that despotic governments encourage or permit the great body of their subjects to seek the blessings of an enlightened system of education; or if, in a few instances, they have made education somewhat popular, they have found themselves compelled, ere long, to allow more liberty to their subjects.

All the ancient republics, and most of the modern, furnish us with examples of the blighting influence of false religion upon popular education and freedom. It will not be doubted that, in the ancient republics, much freedom of thought and action was enjoyed by certain classes; and we know that literature and speculative philosophy were carried to a high degree of perfection; and that the fine arts, also, were most successfully cultivated. We are apt, however, to be dazzled and deceived by the splendor of those literary and artistic productions, that have escaped the ravages of time, and are yet the models of style and taste. We need to ascertain what was the character of the freedom enjoyed in those republics, and what the condition of the mass of the people. Accordingly, history informs us that, in the Athenian and Lacedaemonian states, a large majority were slaves, over whom their masters exercised the power of life and death, and whom they treated with the most inhuman rigor. Nay, - since the debtor became, ipso facto, the slave of the creditor, a large part of those nominally free were in fact bondmen. Those, then, who were really free, constituted, in truth, only a numerous nobility, or aristocracy; so that the government was really an oligarchy. The military spirit, also, controlled and moulded everything else; and we know how, in Sparta, it obliterated the domestic relations, justified theft and deception, and substituted an iron-hearted martial law for the tender charities of life. If the fine arts were cultivated in the Grecian states, yet agriculture and commerce were neglected and despised.

In Rome, the state of things was no better. There you find the same horrid system of slavery; the same right of life and death in the hands of the father and the master over the child and the slave, - resulting in the practice of infanticide, murder, and gladiatorial combats. There, too, the patricians were engaged in endless contests for power with the plebeians; yet all united in submitting to the severest military discipline, and, while professedly free themselves, in subjecting all other nations to an iron yoke. In short, while you find a small part of the people, - a numerous aristocracy, - boasting of freedom, and well educated for the times, the great mass are left ignorant and in servitude, and the whole community is moulded by a martial code, inflexible and bloody, which, indeed, nourished some of the sterner virtues, but stifled the tender charities of life; and while it guarded with jealous care the honor and liberties of the state, kept a large multitude in hopeless servitude at home, and with insatiable ambition preyed upon surrounding nations, till the world and the Roman empire became synonymous terms.

Suppose now any one of the systems of government that were adopted by these ancient republics, with its military spirit, its slavery, and its religion, were to be introduced into New England. What a contrast to the systems of government, religion, education, and social life, which now exist among us! Who of us would not rather choose any of the monarchical, nay, even of the despotic, systems of civilized Europe?

After all, however, there were many noble hearts in those ancient republics, in whom the true spirit of freedom glowed, and who did all they could to impart true liberty and knowledge to their fellow men. What then were the causes that counteracted their efforts, and rendered it impossible for a true system of freedom, or of education, to succeed; which in fact marred and blackened the fair countenance of liberty and civilization with some of the most hideous features of despotism and barbarism? The philosophical historian and politician have long attempted to answer these enquiries; and doubtless some of the causes they have assigned, were powerfully instrumental of such results: But they seem to have overlooked one great source of influence, and that is, religion. They speak, indeed, of the necessity of public virtue to the purity and preservation of freedom: but they seem not to realize that virtue, which springs not from religion, is spurious and ephemeral, and that consequently, if the religion be false, or corrupt, the virtue, the freedom, and education, will be proportionably defective. True, the polytheism of Greece and Rome was the least offensive heathenism, modified as it was by philosophy

and poetry, which the world ever saw. Still it was false enough, and pernicious enough, to permit opinions and practices inconsistent with genuine freedom and popular education.

Were there time, it would be easy to point out similar corrupting and paralyzing influences, emanating from perverted systems of religion, upon most modern republics. But this would require too much of detail for the present occasion.

The history of the efforts made to establish free governments in South America, and in Mexico, strikingly illustrates and confirms the position taken in this discourse. The people there doubtless wonder why their exertions to build up free institutions have produced only a succession of civil wars, with short intervals of military despotism. But when we learn the intolerant character of their religion, we wonder not at the ignorance and superstition of the people; nor that they cannot be governed by anything save despotic power. To expect freedom with such a religion, and such ignorance, is like looking for grapes upon thorns, and figs upon thistles.

Another historic fact illustrative of this argument, is, that a state religion has always exerted an unfavorable influence upon popular education and civil and religious liberty. The mere existence of a state religion, indeed, puts an end to religious freedom, by the bestowment of governmental patronage upon one denomination, and thus leaving the others, at the best, to exist by mere sufferance. Despotism has always found religion a most convenient instrument for riveting its chains upon the people. The state first embraces religion, as if for protection, but soon throttles it, and then uses its lifeless form as a speaking trumpet, through which is proclaimed the divine right of kings, the duty of unreserved submission to their authority, and other anti-republican dogmas. Witness Turkey, Italy, Russia, and Austria; and, I might add, almost every Asiatic kingdom. There you see the perfected fruit of a union of church and state, in the almost total ignorance, degradation, and servitude, of the people. In some milder governments, however, as Great Britain, and Prussia, and other German States, the attempt has been made to combine state religion with the education of the people at large; and Prussia especially presents us with a model system, so far as the mode of instruction is concerned. But the government directs what shall be taught the people, and takes special care that monarchical principles and war doctrines shall be instilled. And since every educated man depends upon the Government for a place, either in the state, the army, or the church, very little of true freedom of opinion can be enjoyed. Nor will a New England man think very highly of the system of popular education in Great Britain, - Scotland excepted, - when he learns, that of the sixteen millions of England and Wales, nearly half cannot write their names, and nearly one third cannot read their mother tongue. Surely there must be some powerful obstacle to the diffusion of knowledge in such a country; but a state religion and a system of aristocracy explain it all. Of all monarchical countries, however, Great Britain possesses the most freedom, the most intelligence, and the most true religion; and would she divorce church and state, almost the last incubus would be removed from her prosperity and happiness.

But arbitrary governments, especially on the continent of Europe, are beginning to learn, that to instruct the people at large, is a hazardous experiment, even though the system of instruction be carefully adapted to the support of their power and the state religion. For if you once put the human mind upon thinking, it will not always stop where you would have it. And in the countries referred to, the people are demanding at least the right of popular representation in the government: and though cannon and bayonets may for a time stifle this demand, it will soon gather explosive force enough, if not regarded, to rend the throne to atoms. The rocking thrones of continental Europe, clearly evince that education is

in advance of liberty and religion. But the reciprocal influence that exists between them, will ere long bring them upon a level; by elevating the two latter, as we may hope, and not by sinking the former.

History furnishes another support to this argument, in the fact, that the countries most distinguished for freedom and general education, are those where the Bible is most widely circulated. For examples we may refer to the United States, Scotland, and Iceland. The latter country, separated from all the world, with arctic snows upon, and volcanic fires beneath its surface, and too poor to be an object of cupidity, though nominally subject to the Danish government, is in reality a free state; and is blessed with a most effective, though peculiar, system of education, and with primitive simplicity of piety. Scotland, too, is nominally a part of a monarchical empire. But it were to be wished that all republics enjoyed as much liberty, and their people were as well educated, and their virtue and piety as pure and elevated. With the exceptions above referred to, we might say the same of England, where the Bible has a wide distribution. The republics of Switzerland too, may be quoted as a striking illustration of this argument. For here we have professedly free states, lying side by side, in some of which, the Bible is restrained in its circulation, and in others it is widely diffused; and it is said that the traveller needs no map to inform him when he has passed from one description of these provinces into the other.

Now it needs no time spent to show, that if education and liberty follow in the track of the Bible, and with a few unimportant exceptions are cramped and sickly where that book is not diffused, - - it requires, I say, no labored argument to show that that book is eminently favorable to free institutions and popular instruction. But if further evidence on this point be ' required, we have it in the history of the Scotch Covenanters and the English Puritans.

Little did these men, who for two hundred years suffered an unrelenting persecution from despots and hierarchs, imagine that they were working out and giving to the world the great Principles of civil and religious liberty. Driven from their native land by the persecutions of Mary, Providence sent them to Geneva, where, in the church founded by such men as Farel and Calvin, they found freedom of Opinion, and the rights of conscience asserted. Having caught the spirit of that church, when permitted to return to England and Scotland, they could not resist the impulse to establish religious freedom there. But in this attempt, they found that they could not secure freedom of conscience, without securing also civil liberty. Hence, they threw themselves manfully into the contest, and the result was the independence of Scotland, and the establishment of the Commonwealth in England. A later, but still more important result, was the settlement of this country, by men who drew their religious principles directly from the Bible, and who carried their lofty ideas of religious freedom into the civil constitution, and into all their plans of education. To these men, therefore, was the world indebted for the first clear development of the true principles of civil and religious liberty. To them, says Hume, the English people owe the whole freedom of their constitution; and as a more recent and eloquent writer observes, *then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forest, - - which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, - and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with unwonted fear.*\* (Macaulay)

Such is what may be called the inseparable Trio, - Religion, Education and Freedom. And such are the arguments by which it is proved how strongly linked together they are, by a chain of influence that conveys with electric speed, the strength and purity, or the weakness and corruption, of one, to all the rest.

The subject suggests a multitude of ' important inferences: And with a brief notice of a few, I will relieve your exhausted patience.

1. It shows us the reason why arbitrary governments and corrupt religions have been so much afraid of the circulation of the Bible.

Their supporters have usually been sagacious enough to discover that the Bible is a stern advocate for civil and religious freedom, and uncompromising towards all corruptions of its spirit. They know that the man, who submits himself fully and sincerely to its principles and spirit, becomes thoroughly republican and hostile to false doctrine. Hence, they sympathize with the priest of a perverted Christianity in England, soon after the art of printing had begun to multiply copies of the scriptures: *we must root out printing*, said he in his sermon, *or printing will root us out*. This was a true prediction; and in these times we are witnessing its fulfilment.

2. The subject shows us that the religious element is fundamental, in order to the support of free institutions.

Nor is it a false religion, or a perverted Christianity, that will do this: but there must be genuine piety in the community, or liberty will ere long degenerate, if it does not utterly expire. And it was the lot of Puritanism, for the first time in this world's history, to discover, and by its sufferings, and struggles, and triumphs, to demonstrate, this most important of all principles in the science of government. Even yet the world is purblind to this truth; and men are everywhere struggling for liberty, and expecting to sustain it when acquired, though religion have but a 'feeble hold upon the community. And when they are disappointed, as they always are, where pure religion does not prevail, enlightened statesmen seem in general to overlook this fundamental defect, and attempt to account for the failure upon other principles. But the Puritan has ever been distinguished, and in almost every country but our own, has been hated and persecuted, not more for the uncompromising features of his theology, than for his stern independence of character. Yet that independence is founded in his religion, and not till his views prevail, and his example be imitated, will men come into the full realization of their dreams of freedom.

3. The subject shows us that the prevalence of true religion will ensure the prevalence of education and liberty.

Christianity is as stern an advocate of education among all classes, as for the freedom of all. Nor can it conceal features so strongly marked: so that wherever it prevails in its purity, it will insist upon enlightening men's minds, and in breaking from their necks every yoke. And here too, Puritanism has set the example. Wherever she has planted her foot, her first care has been, to rear a temple to Jehovah, then to found the College, the Academy, and the Primary. School.

4. We see how important to the defence and purity of true religion, are education and freedom, among all classes of the community.

Though an ignorant 'man and a slave may exercise pious feelings, he can neither defend Christianity against sceptical objections, nor accurately expound its doctrines, nor guard its spirit against the frosts of \_ formalism, or the wildfire of fanaticism. When the metaphysician, by subtle arguments, attempts to show that the external world has no existence, and consequently no argument can thence be deduced for the being of a God: when the phrenologist makes virtue and vice dependant rather upon cranial conformation, than upon moral causes; - - when the physiologist maintains that mental phenomena are a mere function of the brain, and that organic beings, as well as all natural operations, may be the result of law, without a Deity; - - when the astronomer demonstrates that the earth is not fixed, nor



does the sun literally rise and set, as it was formerly supposed the Bible taught; - when the geologist describes a preadamite earth of indefinite duration, and the chemist declares that the world has already been burnt, and therefore, can undergo no future conflagration; - and when the philologist throws doubts over the obvious meaning of scripture, and converts its plainest truths into enigmas; and when baptized philosophy makes divine and poetic inspiration synonymous: - O, what but ripe learning can harmonize all these apparently discordant elements, and vindicate and enucleate the pure truths of the Bible! And what but general intelligence can secure the mass of the community, amid such angry waves, from making shipwreck of the faith.

5. The subject shows us when it may be safe and expedient to unite church and state.

Let no one be startled when we maintain that church and state should be united at the proper time. The only difficulty is, that men have attempted it too early. We have endeavored to show that the government of the church, as described in the New Testament, is a democracy, where the members are governed by supreme love to God, and equal love to all mankind. Now suppose the church to be enlarged till it embraces all the world, and all its members conform strictly to these great principles. Suppose moreover, that all civil governments become strictly republican, and the rulers take the law of God as the basis of all political action. How much, in such a case, would the church differ from the state? Unless there are political measures that have no moral character, the two institutions would be nearly, perhaps precisely, synonymous. Both of them would be, what I have called a Theocratic Democracy; and there would be but one government and one church in all the earth. That would indeed be the perfect state of society, so much talked of, and so little understood. When such a state of the world arrives, - alas, how long will it be delayed! then let church and state be united. Indeed you cannot keep them apart. But till then their union will be as incongruous and incoherent, as the parts of Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold, brass, iron, and clay.

6. We see in this subject the reason why so many efforts to secure freedom, have failed of success.

Men under despotic rulers, suppose that the grand point is to obtain their freedom: whereas a much greater difficulty is to secure it. Knowing the character of the religion, and the state of education in France, before the Revolution in 1789, and in South America, more recently, we might have predicted the anarchy and the despotism that followed the efforts in those countries to establish independence. As republicans, it was indeed natural for us to entertain hopes, that the recent convulsive efforts in continental Europe to establish free institutions, would not be wholly blasted. But we were too forgetful of the state of religion, and of general education in those countries. If a people, who scruple not to hold their political elections, their inductions to office, their public festivals, and their military reviews, on the sabbath, can long maintain a pure republicanism, then the history of the world hitherto must go for nothing as a means of judging of the future. The same may be said essentially of that nation where the popular mind is left uninstructed. And when we recollect, moreover, what millions are ready, at the beck of despots and hierarchs, to smother every cry for freedom, we ought to have been prepared to hear the dying shriek of liberty, which reached us before the last year's close, from every one of these countries but France; and for those rapid developments even there, which show her citizens yet unprepared for free institutions. These nations, it may be hoped, will not sink back into as deep a political night as before: yet we may be sure they will sink to the level of the religion and the education among the people.

7. This subject shows us that nations, as well as individuals, should make the principles of the Bible the basis of their policy and their treatment of one another.

Strange that any other doctrine should have been promulgated: and that the same men, who acknowledge their individual obligation to love their neighbor as themselves, to do unto others as they would that others should do unto them, and to bless them by whom they are persecuted, and even to love their enemies, should maintain that principles of expediency and policy, should take the place of moral principles in managing the affairs of nations. For what reason can be urged to bind individuals to conform to the rules of the Bible, which will not apply to nations; and if pure religion be, as we have endeavored to show, the most important of all the foundations on which a nation's liberty and true glory rest, can that people expect prosperity, if its government substitute something else as the guide of their measures? And yet, had governments conducted towards one another according to Gospel principles, what an amount of blood and treasure would have been spared, and what an amount of happiness secured!

8. In the eighth place, if these three great interests of the community are thus inseparable, then should the different classes, appointed for their protection and advancement, be united also.

He whose special business it is to watch over and defend the interests of religion, should be in sympathy and harmony with those whose lives are devoted to the cause of education; and with those who are appointed to manage our political concerns. And so should these latter classes reciprocate that sympathy towards the guardians of religion. They all should mutually realize, that if the interests of any one of the trio are not properly and efficiently provided for, the interests of the others will suffer also. Instead of indulging illiberal prejudices towards one another, all should feel as if they had a common cause to sustain, and as if a wound could not be inflicted upon one, without reaching the whole. Thus would they form a threefold cord, which, both scripture and experience testify, is not quickly broken.

Finally, the subject defines the great outlines of that policy which the rulers of Massachusetts should ever pursue.

Far be it from me to allude to particular political measures in the presence of the constituted authorities of this Commonwealth. But my office and my subject force me to speak of the great principles on which a government, founded by the Pilgrims, should be conducted. Their first and constant aim was, to establish and foster the institutions of Religion, Education, and Freedom. To sustain Religion, they found it only necessary to allow perfect freedom of opinion, and to protect all in the peaceful exercise of those forms of worship which conscience dictates to be right. They had learnt by bitter experience, that to take religion into the embrace of the state, was only to cramp its vital powers, and convert it into a furious persecuting demon. Education, too, they did not attempt to bring under governmental control; but only by liberal benefactions to stimulate individual efforts. And with such a religion, and such means of education, they did not doubt that the people would select those men to manage their political affairs, who would defend their liberties, and wisely administer the government. It is a matter of just gratulation, that all who have filled the places of honor and trust, once occupied by the Pilgrims, in these respects have followed essentially their system of policy. On questions of political expediency they have had different opinions; but on these fundamental principles, they have all been united. Indeed, no Massachusetts statesman could outlive the storm, which a desertion of these principles would bring upon him. To honor and sustain religion, diffuse knowledge among the people, and preserve true liberty, this is a policy as settled in Massachusetts as the laws of the Medes and Persians. She cannot hope for superiority by her numbers, extent of territory, or any natural advantages. But by the fostering care of a free government over her religious and literary institutions, she can qualify and send forth, as she already has done, strong men into every part of the earth, to place a lever beneath the abodes of ignorance, sin and despotism, and lift them up into the sunshine of Christianity, civilization and freedom.

To give Massachusetts such a character, is the noble work committed to the constituted Authorities of the State now before me. We congratulate them upon the honor of occupying seats made sacred by so long a line of illustrious men, with so illustrious a beginning. It is indeed a distinction to be coveted, to take the place of such men, and to have confided to your management, interests so momentous. And it is a delightful evidence that the spirit of our fathers still lingers here, to find His Excellency, the Governor, His Honor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Honorable Council, the Honorable Senate, and the House of Representatives, instead of converting the Sabbath into a holiday, or a business day, converting a business day into a Sabbath, and calling to their aid the ministers of the Gospel, that at the commencement of their responsible duties, they may recognize their dependence upon an overruling Providence, and baptize their legislation with the spirit of religion.

It is gratifying also to know, that the long and eminent public services of the beloved statesmen, who, for six successive years have filled the two highest places in the Executive Department of the Government, have been a practical exemplification of the principles which I have advocated in this discourse; and therefore, although I have given them no instruction, I feel almost sure that I have had their sympathy. Their oft repeated reelection, affords evidence that the people of Massachusetts are not tired of hearing their rulers called *the Just*. Nor can I doubt that all the other gentlemen composing the government and elected by the same people, are imbued with the like spirit; and that their legislation the present session, will show, that they regard Religion, Education, and Freedom, as inseparable. God give them success in a career so noble and important! And God inspire all their successors with the like spirit. Then, though by the expansion of our national territory, Massachusetts should become relatively almost a point; yet shall it be a point radiant with the light of Piety, of Learning, and of Liberty. And as the stars in the heavens above us, that revolve - within the circle of perpetual apparition, never sink below the horizon, so shall this Commonwealth ever shine bright in the political hemisphere; a morning star, to usher in the full daylight of civilization, of freedom, and of happiness, to the benighted and oppressed in all the earth.

Delivered

At Boston, January 2, 1850

## Sermon 503 Lessons Taught by Sickness

[E. Hitchcock, "Lessons Taught By Sickness" In *A Wreath for the Tomb*  
(J. S. and C. Adams, Amherst, Mass., 1839)]

Text extracted from pdf of *A Wreath for the Tomb* available on Google Books at:

[Link to "Lessons Taught by Sickness"](#)

### LESSONS TAUGHT BY SICKNESS

Sermon delivered Feb. 9, 1839,  
in the Chapel of Amherst College.

*It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*—Psalm cxix. 71.

From the cradle to the grave God keeps every man in a school of moral discipline. The means of instruction are almost infinitely varied, but always most wisely adapted to the age, disposition and circumstances of the individual. Sometimes he uses prosperity, and sometimes adversity; generally health, but sometimes sickness; generally competence, or wealth, but sometimes poverty; sometimes reproach and disgrace, and sometimes popularity and honor. But whenever any change is made in the mode of instruction, we may be sure it is intended for the good of the individual. Like a wise and benevolent parent, God places us, his ignorant and wayward children, under various instructions, that he may operate upon all the principles of our nature and render our discipline more complete: in other words, that we may learn more of his *statutes*.

The *statutes* of the Lord are those eternal principles or laws by which he sustains and governs the material and spiritual worlds. Now just in proportion as we learn and conform to these statutes, shall we be happy; and so far as we are ignorant of them, or refuse conformity, shall we be miserable. The great object of man's existence, therefore, is to learn and obey the statutes of the Lord. Hence in every condition of life it is important to inquire what lessons on this great subject, it is intended we should learn.

Not a few of us, during the present season, have been brought low by sickness: one of the most powerful means of moral discipline which God ever employs. I hope therefore, that I may be allowed to spend a few moments in pointing out some of the most prominent lessons, respecting the statutes of the Lord, which he intends to teach us by this dispensation; especially as I hope the subject may not prove without interest and profit to that more numerous class before me, who have not been thus exercised.

When I speak of sickness I mean that of a decided character. A man may for months and even years be laboring under what is called feeble health, and yet be able to attend to many of the duties and enjoy many of the comforts of life. In such a state he ought indeed to learn many useful lessons, respecting

the statutes of the Lord. But when all the energies of body and mind are assailed with a strong hand, and a fierce and fearful contest commences between the powers of disease and the powers of nature, we find ourselves in quite different circumstances: and even though the instruction be of the same nature, it is brought home to the mind with so much greater emphasis and urgency, as to seem altogether new. I now proceed to point out some of the most important lessons which we ought to learn in such a condition.

In the first place, we are taught that sickness and health are as dependent upon fixed and invariable laws, as any operations of nature.

This statement is contrary to the prevailing opinion among men: or rather perhaps I ought to say, most men without ever having thought much on the subject, have a feeling that sickness assails men arbitrarily, and that the cause does not exist in themselves: or to speak more religiously, sickness is a special act of God's Providence intended for chastisement, and in selecting the individuals, God does not act according to natural laws, but according to his own sovereign will, irrespective of law. They are apt to regard diseases as birds of prey sailing about in the atmosphere, and pouncing upon any who may chance to come within their reach. If a man of such views can say of the sick that he took a cold which settled into a fever, or pleurisy, or consumption, he is apt to feel that he has given all the explanation in his power of the origin of the disease. The question seems not to occur to him, why the man took the cold, or why the cold settled into an alarming disease. Hence if that disease removes the man out of the world, perhaps in the morning of his days, or from a station of great usefulness, it is called a mysterious Providence, a dark dispensation.

Now I would not be thought to deny that sickness is always an act of God's Providence, and in strict accordance with his sovereign will. But I maintain that in general, He exercises that Providence and that sovereignty, as he does in respect to almost everything else, according to fixed laws: so that when disease assails us, we may be sure that there is a natural cause for it. God has ordained certain statutes which must be observed, or health cannot be maintained. If a man voluntarily or involuntarily, ignorantly or knowingly, violate these rules, he must as certainly suffer the bad effects, as if he thrust his hand into the fire, or leaped over a precipice. True the human constitution is endowed with a remarkable power of resisting morbid influences to a certain extent, so that severe disease may not follow every slight deviation from the laws of health. In such a case, however, nature warns us by the catarrh, the headache, debility, or in some other way, that she is oppressed: and if we do not heed her voice but persist in a disregard of hygienic laws, she yields at length to the accumulated pressure, and severe disease, perhaps death, is the consequence. In such a case it is no more mysterious that a man should sicken and die, than that he should be dashed in pieces if he throws himself from a tower. It would not save him in the one case, though ignorant of the laws of gravity, neither will it save him in the other, though ignorant of the laws of health. No matter of what age or condition, whether useful or useless, honored or despised he has been violating the laws of his physical nature and must suffer the penalty.

If these views are correct, there are two considerations that make it very important they should take the place of those vague notions on this subject which now prevail. In the first place, until men believe that disease and health depend upon fixed and invariable laws, they will not be careful to study those laws in order to avoid the first and preserve the latter. In the second place, a large proportion of our sicknesses are the result of criminal negligence or temerity. But so long as we can make ourselves believe that they

are brought upon us by fate, or chance, or the Providence of God acting without law, we shall be insensible to the personal guilt that attaches to us.

Now the tendency of severe sickness is to bring us to understand this subject aright. When prostrated by disease and racked by pain, we are very apt to recollect not a few instances in which we violated the laws of health by improper exposure to the inclemencies of the season, or by dietetic excesses, or by overworking the mind or the body, or in some other way. And we remember too, how distinctly nature warned us of our danger, if we should persist in oppressing her. But we vainly trusted to the strength of our constitution, or some other delusion, until nature yielded in the contest and we found ourselves unexpectedly in the hands of an unmerciful giant, who had power to rack and distress if not destroy. Very few in such a case can feel that no blame attaches to them in the sight of God. They no longer view attention to health as a matter of small importance. they feel that their sin demands deep and unfeigned repentance, and that they are suffering the just punishment of having violated a fixed law of Jehovah. Would that the multitudes who are now doing this, would learn this lesson without passing through so severe a school of discipline as God has found it necessary to make some of us enter | But among the healthy, the delusion on this subject is too deep, I fear, to be broken by any other means. And let those of us who remember the wormwood and the gall of our discipline, see to it that we do not relapse into our former state of temerity and fool hardiness.

2. In the second place, sickness teaches us how entire is our dependence upon God.

In a few days, or even hours, we find ourselves reduced from a state of activity and energy to more than infant weakness. It seems as if it needed but one breath more of the same blast to finish the work. We lie tottering on the very brink of the grave, and we can hardly see what keeps us out of it, unless it be the power of God. The power of God that is indeed our only hope and safety. Does anyone say it is better to trust in the physician's skill But what is his skill apart from the power of God I do not mean the power of God exerted miraculously; for it may be put forth in accordance with the laws of nature with just as much efficiency and certainty of reaching particular cases, as if those laws were contravened by it and a manifest miracle were wrought. Nor would it in such a case be any the less the agency of God, than if miraculous. The grand inquiry is, has an event taken place as God would have it If it has, why should we look upon it as any the less His work, because He has accomplished it through the instrumentality of second causes, which He himself established 2 If I am recovered from sick ness, shall I refuse to acknowledge the hand of God in it, because it was through the aid of skillful physicians, or careful nursing, or appropriate remedies For who so arranged my circumstances that I should be favored with these advantages And who knows what changes in my circumstances God accomplished for my good, not by interfering with the regular sequence of nature's operations, but by an alteration, out of our sight, in some of the links of that long chain of secondary causes which connects visible nature with his will?

The writers of the bible rarely attempt to distinguish between God's miraculous and ordinary agency. Has God done it was their grand inquiry: If he had, the glory was all ascribed to him; and the agency, too, whether accomplished miraculously or not. And in order to ascertain whether God had done anything, they only inquired whether an event had taken place; for it was with them a settled principle, that nothing occurs without His agency –an agency too, as real and efficient as if every event were a miracle. It was reserved for the speculative spirit of modern times, to draw a broad line of distinction between miraculous and common agency, and then to make the inference, as unphilosophical as it is hostile to

vital piety, that God does not really bring about any events that are not miraculous; but that all others are to be regarded only as the result of the laws of nature. Much of the unholy leaven of this false principle deeply affects the experience of most christians. A good cure for it is to be thrown helpless upon the bed of sickness. If a man is not then brought to feel himself absolutely at God's disposal, he never will feel it. His vain self-confidence in which he had trusted while in health, such as his prudence, his temperance, his regularity, his good constitution, and the like, all fail him now; and he is thrown upon the sovereign mercy and power of Jehovah. If one christian feeling lingers in his breast, he cannot but feel that not a ray of hope can come from any other quarter.

3. In the third place, sickness tends to quicken our sensibilities to the value of our blessings.

If we never duly estimate our blessings till they are lost, then health can never be justly appreciated till we are sick. And were proof wanting to show how low an estimate men place upon health, it would be furnished by the little care they take to preserve it; and the wanton manner in which they expose it. But when the pains and prostration of disease assail them, they are amazed to see what a blessing they have lost, perhaps irrecoverably; and they look back with mortification and penitence upon their insensibility to the greatest of all God's natural blessings. Oh if they could but recover it, if God would again put into healthful play the ten thousand wheels and springs of the fearfully and wonderfully made machinery of their animal system; they feel sure they could never again neglect its preservation, or become insensible to its value. And such a state of feeling will lead the Christian to see how much he has undervalued other blessings of providence; and make him feel more sensibly his indebtedness for any that are still continued: so that I doubt not but often the cup of cold water that allays the sick man's fever, is received with more heart-felt and lively gratitude, than all the bounteous provision God has given him for his bodily wants during months of health.

Again: God sends upon no man a continued sickness so severe that it has no seasons of intermission: and in most cases these seasons when suffering ceases, or its severity is relaxed, are frequent. Now both suffering and pleasure are greatly heightened by contrast: so that the more severe our pains, the more happy and grateful shall we be in their mitigation. With a sensibility to favors thus quickened, the sick man often enjoys intently what would excite scarcely no emotion in the bosom of the strong and healthy. Hence the care of friends, physicians, and attendants: even a word or look of sympathy, excite a sense of gratitude and obligation.

I have been made acquainted with an example of the effect of this quickened sensibility upon the imagination of a sick man, which it may not be irrelevant to mention. He had long been waiting and hoping in vain for the return of that natural perspiration whose suppression is so trying in fever. At length one morning he was awakened from gentle slumber by a dream, in which he fancied he heard a voice saying to him, *here is a present for you*, while at the same instant, a large card studded with precious stones was dropped before him. So strong was the impression on his mind that the scene was reality, that even when awake he looked around for the jewelry; but putting his hand into his bosom he perceived that it was covered with perspiration; and he immediately saw what the *present* was, which his imagination had converted into gems; which, in fact, would have been far less acceptable.

I shall notice but one other effect which this quickened sensibility to blessings produces upon the devoted christian, who feels entirely resigned to the will of God. It leads him to look upon his sickness, even while its paroxysms are upon him, as a blessing for which he ought to be thankful. He does not know what is to be its termination. But if it remove him out of the world, he feels that to depart and be

with Christ, is better than continuance here: and if he should recover, he feels that the lessons he has learnt in this rough school of discipline, are more than an equivalent for all his sufferings. Thus can he honestly thank God for his affliction, which grace has changed into a blessing. But it is to be feared that the actual experience of only a few, is of this elevated character.

4. In the fourth place, sickness gives to the Christian an experimental proof of the truth, and power of the doctrine of gratuitous salvation by the blood of Christ.

It is no difficult matter for a man to persuade himself that the system of religious belief which he has adopted while in health, will sustain him through the last conflict of nature. But the actual trial can alone make it certain that he has built upon a rock. Let him lie helpless and in distress upon the bed of sickness, not knowing but it may prove the bed of death. In such an hour he cannot but inquire with entire sincerity and intense earnestness, whether he has anything to rest upon that will sustain him amid the stormy billows that roar around him. His religious opinions may have been merely traditionary, or adopted because many esteemed friends or learned men were their advocates: or because his mind was filled with strong prejudices against the opposite opinions. But he has now reached a point where pressing and immediate danger overpowers prejudice, where friends and learned men can afford him no help, and where the only inquiry is, whether his principles are the principles of the Bible, and will sustain him now that he must venture alone amid the perils of death and the judgment. He looks back upon his past life and recollects perhaps that he has been moral and conscientious in his general conduct, doing to others as he would they should do to him, and striving to keep all the commandments of God. Can he venture forward into the deep waters before him relying on such a foundation? A hundred passages of Scripture rush into his mind, declaring in substance, that not by works of righteous mess which we have dome, but according to God's mercy hath he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed down on us abundantly through Jesus Christ. By deeds of the law can no flesh living be justified. But by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Oh, to make his own righteousness a ground of trust in such an hour, would resemble his conduct who should cling to the ship's anchor as she was going down amid the waves. His own righteousness If he has any just conception of the strictness of God's law, or of the sin that has been ever mixed with his best and holiest services, sin enough to bring just punishment instead of reward upon every one of those services, he will search in vain through all his life for any righteousness that he will dare call such as the pure light of eternity falls upon it. However much of conscientious ness and morality and kind feeling and reverence for God he may recollect in his life, he will be conscious of much more of sinfulness; and un less gross ignorance of the Bible or philosophic pride comes to the man's relief, his own righteous ness as a ground of acceptance with God, will disappear, and he will rather be disposed to write barrenness upon all his life and to loathe and abhor himself before a holy God. He will see that his case is a hopeless one, unless some other resting place can be found for his sinking soul. Here his eye is met by the cross, standing as the central pillar of truth, based immovably on the promise and mercy of God, rising high above all the storms of life and death, and bearing on its surface the inscription, other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. To that cross faith turns her eager gaze and throws around it her arms as with a convulsive embrace. The soul feels at once that she has found at last a refuge, from which, neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers; nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate her. The man may have doubts whether his faith is genuine, but he no longer doubts that he has found the true and only way of a sinner's justification



before God; and he knows that so long as the promise and the throne of God remain, he who walks in it will assuredly be saved. He may, while in health, have been speculatively taught these truths: but now he has an experimental knowledge of their reality and power. While in health, he had a rational conviction that they would prove a sufficient support when the winds should blow and the floods beat upon him. But now he has been in the midst and the fury of the storm, and has felt these truths to be an immoveable rock beneath his feet. Scepticism may advance plausible objections to the plan of gratuitous salvation through a Savior's sufferings, and he may not be able to answer them. But this will not now shake his confidence in that plan; for he possesses an argument in its favor which the sceptic can never understand nor refute: because faith only can apprehend it.

It is worthy of remark in this connection, that a sick bed is often the best place for feeling the power and value of particular passages of Scripture. Out of the storehouse of memory they come clothed with a life and an energy which we never before knew them to possess, although we might have read them a thousand times, and knew that they taught important truth. Let such passages as the following come into the mind of a man placed in the circumstances which I have described: This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:-Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect. It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? To every Christian while in health, such passages appear fraught with important truth. But it is only the man who lies trembling and sinking on the borders of the grave and is abandoned by all worldly supports, it is only he that can realize their richness, extent, and omnipotence. They seem at once to fill up the dark and bottomless gulf of the valley and shadow of death into which he is about entering, and form an adamant foundation, over which his soul may safely pass to the world of glory. Learned men have labored hard to illustrate the Scriptures: But severe sickness without delirium has often done more in one day to make them intelligible and impressive, than all the folios of theological lore that have ever been written.

5. In the fifth place, sickness teaches us that a more unfavorable season can hardly be found, than during an attack of disease, for beginning a preparation for eternity.

The work of regeneration is a great work, requiring the calmest and yet most powerful exercise of the reasoning and the moral powers of which a man is capable: and if the mind is not in a state for such exercises, the work will most probably prove spurious, and the last state of the man be worse than the first. Now just think of the condition of a man assailed by severe disease. All the powers of the constitution must rally to resist the onset: And then the physician must try to excite a counter irritation in the system, which shall be more powerful than the disease itself, in order to conquer it: and in doing this, he is often compelled to administer remedies which will bring on a torpor of all the powers of body and mind. Thus beset on every side, it is difficult enough for the soul to exercise those virtues which she has already acquired, but what a hope less task then to begin repentance for sin, faith in Christ, and love to God. It is, as Jeremy Taylor remarks, as if a man were to *begin to study philosophy when he is going to dispute publicly in the faculty*. We may add, it is far worse: for a failure in such a dispute would only bring upon a man worldly loss and disgrace: but to fail of regeneration is to fail of salvation, and to incur shame and everlasting contempt. Yet so faint is the prospect that the work will be accomplished upon a

sick bed, that I am confident the ministers of the gospel would not urge it did they not fear that it is the sick man's only opportunity, and did they not know that out of the thousands who have tried a death bed repentance, at least one,—the thief upon the cross with Christ,—did thereby secure salvation.

Now what man in his senses would rest his eternal happiness upon such an almost hopeless contingency as this? Yet I fear that some who hear me have nothing better to hope for. From day to day and week to week they are delaying repentance, the very first step towards salvation. Meanwhile their last sickness may be lurking in their veins and poisoning the springs of life; or if even many years are before them, one delay begets another, until the longest life is run out, and the great work of salvation is still to be begun upon a sick bed. If this be not infatuation, what is The Scriptures call it madness; and what insanity can be more fatal? Ah, my unconcerned friends, deeply as you may resent the charge of madness, it is certain that you are now taking exactly the course which has carried multitudes before you to perdition. They did not feel their danger more than you do. They calculated upon a future day for repentance; and to this mad delusion they clung just as you now cling, until the last sickness came, and in spite of their unavailing efforts at death bed repentance, they were hurried away unprepared for their final account. And why should I expect it to be any better with you? True, I testify to-day from experience, that of all places in this world, a sick bed is the last which a man ought to select for the work of repentance. But this is no new testimony. It rung from a thousand sick beds in the ears of those who have gone before you to perdition. But they either did not believe it, or presumed upon repentance at some earlier and more convenient season, as you do now. Alas, alas, how dreadful is the delusion of the unconverted heart! Oh how terrible is the disappointment when it awakes to the reality!

6. In the sixth place, sickness rectifies our estimate of our worldly plans, pursuits, and importance.

There are some worldly pursuits in which no Christian can engage without a direct violation of the law of God. But in general the ordinary pursuits of men are lawful in themselves, and the sin, if any, lies in the motive or the manner of conducting them. And as to these two points, Christians often labor under a very strong self-delusion. They commence these worldly pursuits, perhaps, with proper motives and in a proper manner: that is, they keep them in subordination to the higher interests of the soul, and in fact they endeavor thereby to glorify God. But gradually and secretly, selfish and ambitious motives impel them forward: they enlarge their plans: they become so absorbed in them that the peculiar duties of religion are neglected or imperfectly performed. Their worldly pursuits continue to rise in importance in their estimation, and they can see how in a variety of ways they can thereby do much good to mankind and bring honor to God. It may be that they are engaged in the acquisition of wealth by lawful means: but they mean to employ that wealth in the promotion of worthy and even religious objects. Or it may be that some gigantic effort in literature or science, requiring years of hard labor, has been undertaken, which they suppose will be of vast benefit to the world. Absorbed in the engrossing pursuit, and magnifying its importance by seeing it through a false medium, the idea of being suddenly removed from the earth, while their long cherished plans are unfinished, seems a terrible judgment to themselves, and a heavy calamity for the world.

Now I will not deny but a Christian may so conduct his worldly affairs, that they shall appear as important in sickness as in health. But as professing Christians in general live, I feel sure that the light of eternity that falls upon a sick bed, will present the world in an aspect much altered. We can now compare it with eternity more fairly than we have ever done: And oh, into how diminutive a space does it shrink and how are its brightest scenes made dark and uninviting by the infinitely brighter glories of

heaven Even though our worldly pursuits have been honorable and praiseworthy, yet how strangely unimportant and diminutive have they become! In such a situation, also, we can discover in our past efforts and enterprises, so much of selfishness, pride, and unhallowed ambition, which we have never suspected before, as still farther to lessen our estimate of their value. Even though our unfinished plans, on which we have spent so many years of labor, should never be completed, we now perceive that the world would not lose much. And should this prove our last sickness, we can see that only a very small blank would be made in society, which would be quickly filled. The sad predictions of Henry Kirk White in his last sickness, chime in with our feelings.

*Fifty years And who will hear of Henry  
I shall sink As sinks the traveller in the crowded streets  
Of busy London.—Some short bustle's caus'd,  
A few inquiries, and the crowd close in,  
And all's forgotten.*

*[Source: Henry Kirke White, 1808]*

And yet, if our feelings are such as they should be, we shall not experience in such circumstances the melancholy of disappointed ambition, but the subdued and humble spirit of him who has been taught a new and striking lesson of worldly vanity and delusion, and who is led thereby to take hold with a firmer grasp upon the substantial glories of eternity. If in such an hour we can only feel confident that our names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, cheerfully can we resign all the expectations and honors of this life.

I have sometimes stood on the banks of a mighty river, when its swollen waters were passing rapidly by, and watched the bubbles that successively rose and burst upon the agitated surface. They came up and vanished without noise, and to a cursory observer neither their appearance nor disappearance would have been noticed, so numerous were they upon the broad expanse. True, some of them were larger than others: but to an eye that took in the whole surface, they all appeared small, nor did the bursting of the largest, arrest for a moment, or produce any other effect upon the stream that bore them onward. No eye, save that of mine and their Omniscient Creator, took any interest in their existence or their loss. How just an emblem is this of the stream of human society, as it often appears upon the bed of sickness! We then perceive that we are but the bubbles on its surface, and that when we disappear, others will soon rise in our place, while the great current will move on unaffected by the change. Nay, except by a small circle of friends or dependents, our departure will be unnoticed; and in a short period every vestige of our existence will be blotted from the earth. But as the bubble upon the literal waters, when it bursts, ascends in vapor and is changed into the bright and beautiful cloud on the arch of heaven, so if we can feel in that hour, that when we vanish from the world, our spirits are prepared to rise into the New Jerusalem above, and to become bright seraphs before the throne, with how little of melancholy emotion shall we see our most dazzling earthly visions fade away!

Are there any before me to whom these representations seem to be an exaggeration, and calculated to paralyze all effort in worldly pursuits, even though they be of the noblest character, and sanctified by religion? Such are probably the very individuals who in the day of sickness would be made to feel how empty and barren is this world, of how little comparative importance are their noblest plans for wealth or distinction, or for the acquisition of learning, or for promoting the best interests of society, and how small will be the difference with the world whether those plans are executed or not. For if they were not

immoderately devoted to their worldly pursuits, they would not fear that these would be too much depreciated when brought into comparison with eternity; and if they had not too high an opinion of their own importance to the world, they would not need the stimulus of great expectations to keep them at work. True it is, that the views I have presented may dishearten men of this character. But this is just what they need. They have got too exalted notions of themselves and their plans; and selfishness and ambition are a secret leaven in their hearts which needs to be rooted out. I have no fears that the views I have presented will paralyze his efforts, who labors with a desire to please God. Such a man labors because God directs him to be diligent in business while at the same time he is fervent in spirit: and he is willing to leave it with God to determine whether his efforts shall meet with little or great success. He knows that it depends upon God whether he or his plans prove of any importance to the world, since in themselves both are of little consequence. He knows that even though his name and every vestige of his memory should be blotted from the earth, yet the effects of his labors on human happiness and salvation, if he has done his duty, will remain to the end of time: and he looks not for his reward in the plaudits of future generations, but in the approbation of his final judge. Such a man will not fear that he shall be discouraged by too low an opinion of himself or of the world. For even with him, and how much more with others, the danger is all the other way: and in spite of all that I have said, and a thousand others have said, probably every individual of this audience will think more highly of himself and of his plans and importance than he ought to think: so that when sickness comes, he will be astonished at the delusion that has been so long practised upon him.

7. In the seventh place, sickness sometimes affords delightful and vivid anticipations of the Christian's everlasting rest.

Sickness may produce this effect in two ways. In the first place, it may cause so much suffering as to make the repose of heaven seem doubly sweet, and excite strong desires to enter upon its enjoyment. In the second place, by bringing eternity near and cutting off worldly prospects, it may awaken into lively exercise the Christian's complacency in eternal scenes and fill his soul with peace and joy. In the first case, where present suffering is contrasted with future rest, the joyful anticipation of heaven which results, may exist without affording any evidence of vigorous piety or unusual preparation for death. Perhaps I cannot better illustrate this part of the subject, than by presenting you in detail the experience of an individual, who was brought low by sickness: though I am not without fears, lest the recital which he has given, should awaken more of philosophical speculation than of pious feeling.

During the severest part of his sickness he experienced great pleasure from casting his eye over the beautiful landscape that surrounded him, and especially in watching the glorious tints of the opening morning and the closing day. And through the mercy of God disease did not at any time bring the least cloud over his mind: yet both the mind and the brain were weak, and easily affected: and he noticed from day to day a curious optical illusion, by which almost every irregular object on which he cast his eye, was made to assume a resemblance to the human countenance seen in profile. One day he had lain for hours under the operation of a painful application, which was so irritating, that for a moment his brain seemed ready to turn, and his mind to lose its balance. He directed a cooling application to his forehead, whose soothing influence was so great, that almost in a moment the pain and excitement subsided as if by magic, and a delightful calm succeeded in all his bodily and mental powers. At that moment he turned his eyes upon the landscape abroad, and there too, all was calmness and peace. Not a breath seemed to be stirring in heaven or earth. Above the eastern hills there lay in calm majesty a broad belt of clouds, which the rays of the setting sun had tinged with purple and gold, while above

them the clear blue sky looked smiling down. To the south a mountain ridge lay stretched out in the same sober grandeur, with its indented top reposing against the heavens. It was a Saturday's sunset: the hour, when according to his education and conviction, the sabbath begins. Who does not see that such a scene as this must have powerfully affected his mind, corresponding as it did with the quiet which had there just taken the place of protracted suffering! Oh what an emblem of heavenly rest did it present to his fancy! How could he but feel that he stood on the verge of eternity, and could look across the separating line between this and the future world, and catch a glimpse of the calm and the joy of heaven! When he turned his thoughts backward, how dreary and painful did his path appear while disease had been dragging him over a rough and perilous road. Or when his vision extended still farther backward, he saw inscribed upon the toilsome labor of years, vanity and vexation of spirit. Could he now return and tread again that same dreary path? Probably he had already passed over the most perilous and trying part of the dark passage that leads from this into the eternal world, and drank already the bitterest part of the fatal cup. A few more pains and nature, already nearly worn out, would give over the contest, and the dark valley be all passed through, and the glory, of which the emblem was before him, would be reality. Surely selfishness itself, if not wholly destitute of a hope of heaven, would be drawn strongly onward in circumstances like these.

But this was not all. While thoughts like these were passing through his mind, he chanced to look through the window of his apartment in such a direction that the sight fell upon the entangled yet graceful branches of a venerable elm, that stood at some distance. These boughs appeared to rest against the beautiful purple cloud that lay so calmly along the eastern horizon; and by the curious optical illusion already mentioned, they formed the distinct outlines of a large group of noble human countenances, sketched upon the clouds. He saw in a moment that it was an illusion: for it was only in one particular spot that he could perceive the least resemblance to a human countenance; and by changing his position a little, he could destroy the illusion: but the same appearance returned as often as he resumed his original position, and precisely the same countenances. They all appeared calm, dignified and happy—in perfect keeping with the whole scene, nor could he, by any change of position, produce the least distortion of a feature, or change at all the calm and happy expression that played upon them all. It was not exactly a smile; but a mixture of happiness, love and dignity, beaming from their faces. He distinctly recognized in the group the features of several Christian acquaintances, who had long since gone to their reward, and among them those of his own father.

Now although this individual was not for one moment deceived as to the true nature of this illusion, although he knew then, as well as at any time afterwards, that he saw nothing but the branches of a tree with a cloud beyond—yet who does not see that such a vision at such a moment must greatly heighten the effect of all the other circumstances? Was the scene an emblem of heavenly rest? Here too could he see departed friends and venerable forms of other Christians, by their winning looks, inviting him to come and participate in their pure and eternal joys. True it was an illusion of the senses: but it was a lively emblem of the reality: and therefore he might lawfully gaze and muse upon it, and give himself up to be borne along by its exciting power. Is it strange, therefore, if while under such an influence, the only thought that could make him wish to return again to mingle in worldly pursuits, was the image of a destitute, family, struggling alone and without experience against a selfish and overbearing world! Is it strange, that he could adopt as his own, the language of Paul: I am in a strait betwixt two: having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better? How could he in such an

hour but feel how empty and unsatisfying is this world; and how could his desires but be borne onward and upward by a strong impulse towards the pure and peaceful rest of heaven!

I have spoken of another kind of delightful anticipation of heavenly rest, called into exercise by sickness and resulting from habitual complacency in holy objects. The man, who when in health has made God his portion, and mused upon his character as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, and upon all the great truths of revelation until a delightful complacency in them has taken firm hold of his heart and influenced his life, will find that complacency increased by sickness, because this takes out of his way many a hindrance, —throws the world behind his back, and brings him close to the margin of the celestial world. In a few days or hours perhaps, he will be in the midst of that glorious city, where holy objects alone will solicit his attention, and from whose golden streets he shall go no more out for ever. And as we find our affections for home kindling anew as we approach the cherished spot, and begin to catch glimpses of well-remembered objects, so does the devoted Christian's heart glow with holy rapture, as sickness begins to remove the veil that hides eternal scenes, and he comes into a nearer view of the objects of long-cherished affection. It is this that has often made the Christian's bed of sickness a place of serenity and joy, instead of suffering, and made him exultingly triumph while nature was sinking under the strong arm of death. God throws in upon his oppressed spirit the bright light of eternity, and it brings with it a foretaste of heavenly joy. Death is thus disarmed of his sting, and is conquered in the very moment of his victory. Oh, this is a state of mind which it should be an object of high ambition with the Christian to attain: but which he only can secure who leads a life of devoted holiness.

I close the subject with a few inferences.

1. This subject should excite those of us who have been recently exercised with sickness, to faithful self-examination.

What have we actually learnt in this school of severe discipline \* Does any important religious truth remain impressed more deeply than before upon our minds We have been permitted again to resume worldly pursuits: do we engage in them with the same spirit as before, or do we tread more carefully, as if upon more dangerous and treacherous ground Does a sense of obligation for sparing mercy constrain us to consecrate ourselves more entirely to the glory of God? Do we feel the need of such consecration in order to be prepared for the next sickness, which we are now taught may come in an hour when we think not Does the cross of Christ appear to us more precious than ever, and every other ground of support for eternity, delusion and fallacy Do we still feel so deeply the emptiness and illusory nature of mere worldly pursuits, that we can keep them in their proper place, that is, subordinate to the higher interests of the soul? Does the cause of the Redeemer seem to us more precious than formerly, and are we willing to make greater sacrifices to promote it Especially do we more deeply realize the critical and alarming condition of our impenitent friends and acquaintance 2 Are our prayers for every good object more fervent, our faith stronger, and our humility deeper? Oh let us not rest till these questions are faithfully answered. We have been under faithful discipline: and if it has not softened our hearts, it must have hardened them at a fearful rate. It may be lawful for us to pray that we may be preserved from future sickness: but we ought to fear still more, lest God should utter concerning us the fearful interrogatory, Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more? The most dreadful judgment which God ever brings upon a man in this world, is to bestow upon him, while his heart is unreconciled, uninterrupted health and prosperity.

2. The subject shews us the importance of attaining to eminent holiness.

This alone can sustain a man with certainty when sickness brings death near. As it is an easy matter to construct a vessel or find a pilot that shall be safe and sufficient when the sea is open and calm, so mere philosophy, or morality, or a speculative adoption of Christianity, or self-righteousness, will seem abundantly sufficient while we are in health and prosperity: but when the mountain billows begin to roll over us, and the deep yawns beneath us, and the fatal breakers are before us, one only vessel can outride the storm, one only pilot can guide it through in safety. That holiness which makes Christ the Alpha and Omega, which is the fruit of God's Spirit, and which has become vigorous by long exercise, is alone sufficient for such an hour. And never yet has that holiness failed a man in that dark passage where every other refuge fails. But this is not the acquisition of an hour, a week or a month. It is the fruit alone of long discipline in the school of Christ, - the reward of patient and persevering labor in his service. He who has neglected that service, or lingered in the Christian race, may cry in agony of spirit after this holiness, when he sees his perishing need of it. But man cannot and God will not answer his prayer. Oh, it is only in the season of health that so rich a boon can be acquired.

3. The subject shows in what a world of delusive shadows we live.

Surely, says the Psalmist, every man walketh in a vain show. And yet we none of us feel it until we come so near to eternity that its brighter light dissipates the shadow that surrounds us, and the rainbow hues that were painted upon it disappear. Says the Psalmist in another place, as a dream when one awaketh, so O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise, their image—that is, the delusive shadow which the men are pursuing who neglect his service. When sickness or any other severe calamity overtakes them, their brightest visions vanish like a dream when one awakes. Indeed, who has not sometimes felt as if the prophet's language respecting one delusion would apply to every mere worldly pursuit. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth and behold he eateth: but he awaketh and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite.

I would not thus hold up the dark side of human life, did I not know that until men see and feel its vanity, they will not seek more substantial treasures: did I not know also, that no man can learn how to enjoy this world, until he has learnt its emptiness and vanity. And did I not know also, that even when we think the most diminutively of this world, we shall still estimate it too highly as compared with eternity, and love it too well. —

4. The subject shows us how overwhelming will be the disappointment of those whose last sickness finds them entirely unprepared for death.

The human heart is never utterly miserable while it can find something on which to rest even the feeblest hope. Such supports unconverted men do find all along their path, until the last sickness comes. Then they find themselves at once suspended by a failing thread over the blackness of eternal darkness. They look around in utter amazement to find that every refuge in which they have trusted has vanished, and a burning sense of utter ruin withers all their spirits. In the strong language of revelation, how are they brought into desolation as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors. But why should I draw out the painful picture? For well I know that once, amid the buoyancy of youth and health, and the delusions of a sceptical spirit, although entirely unprepared for death, I should have listened to such a representation of my condition, either with entire indifference, or secret contempt. And why should I

hope that these representations will make any better impression on those who hear me, whose hearts have never felt the power of converting grace. Alas, I dare not hope that they will realize their dangerous condition, unless that grace be given them, or sickness shall make them the subjects of that terrible experiment which I have described. God grant them the former God save them from the agony of the latter

5. Finally, how delightful is it to look forward to that world, where sin, sickness and death, shall never enter!

In this world we sicken and die because we have sinned: for by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. But in a future world, because no sin will be there, sickness and death will be excluded. Here the chilling thought often comes over the mind, that the last sickness may be near, when many a tie of affection must be violently sundered, and many a fond farewell choke the utterance. We shrink instinctively from that unknown agony which may seize us as we engage alone in the mortal conflict. But when the Christian's faith lifts up the veil and looks a little beyond, a sinless and immortal home opens to her view. Already she sees gathered there a mighty army of the redeemed, once sinful, sickly and mortal, but now guarded from all their former foes by more than impregnable ramparts, by the oath and promise of God. There, in the arms of everlasting love, the believer sees many a dear Christian friend, who has safely passed the dark valley, and forgotten his fears and sufferings in the security, the love, and the joy of heaven. No raging heat, no chilling cold, no evening's damp, no poisonous drink, or poisonous food, and no warring passions in that pure world, can stir up disease in the newly organized body, the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Oh how bright are the golden streets of that celestial city, and her gates of pearl, and her foundations of precious gems ' And how pure is that river of the water of life, which proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb. How delicious the twelve manner of fruits, borne by the trees of life which line that river's banks, and overshadow those streets And no night is there: and the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And God has wiped away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. Oh, when faith and hope can gaze upon such a vision as this, how does the holy heart sigh for a release from her bondage to the world, which, like a pirate, has bound her to the oar in a distant and stormy sea

*But faint not, heir of heaven;—a moment bear  
Thy bonds, nor fear the storms that round thee rise.  
Thy Father, thy Almighty Friend on high,  
Looks down and sees thee struggling mid the deep,  
And will conduct thee safe from final wreck.  
Soon shall thy spirit, from its bondage freed,  
On angel's wings borne joyous o'er the waves,  
Regain those shores of light, whose fruits and streams  
Are life and joy; where day eternal shines;  
Where love ineffable, immortal, reigns.*



Delivered

At Amherst College, February 9, 1839

## Sermon 504 Nature of Intemperance in Eating

[E. Hitchcock, "Nature of Intemperance in Eating,"  
*American National Preacher* 8 (Mar. 1834): 337-52; Hitchcock's original  
 manuscript is also in the Amherst College Archives, EOH, Box 9, folder 14.]

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### NATURE OF INTEMPERANCE IN EATING

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER  
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SERMONS CLXIII & CLXIV

Br Rev. EDWARD HITCHCOCK  
 PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY AND NATURAL HISTORY  
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### NATURE OF INTEMPERANCE IN EATING

*Jude 12—Feeding themselves without fear.*

In no way has intemperance made so many conquests as by concealing its true character. Not long since, it was almost universally supposed that the habitual use of ardent spirit, in moderate quantity, was consistent with strict temperance. And even yet, multitudes hug the murderous delusion. A still greater number would regard it extravagant to say, what is undoubtedly true, that any use of this substance, except in sickness, is intemperance. For if excess of any kind constitute intemperance, is it not intemperance to introduce into the system, that which, in the least quantity, is injurious; and which is as really a poison, as arsenic?

Still more erroneous is public opinion respecting the nature of *intemperance in eating*. Though it be at this moment almost universally prevalent, and much more destructive of health, happiness, and life, than ardent spirit; yet so insensible are the community to its existence, that even the word intemperance has come to signify excess in drinking merely; as if no other kind of intemperance were deserving of notice. And multitudes even of the most conscientious, are daily guilty of gross excess in the use of food, without the slightest apprehension that they are infringing at all upon any of the rules of temperance. Like the abandoned deceivers mentioned by Jude, *they feed themselves without fear*; not, indeed, because they are destitute of religious principle, but because they have no distinct apprehensions of the nature of this kind of intemperance.

It is extremely desirable that definite and correct principles on this subject should take the place of those loose and inadequate views that now so generally prevail. For of what use is it to have all men approve of temperance, while nearly all are intemperate in practice? To call things by their right names, is a most important step in every attempt at reformation. What a magical influence has it exerted in respect to ardent spirit, to have proved that it is poison; and that, therefore, its habitual, even though moderate use, is intemperance. True, it is not so easy to draw the line between temperance and excess in food, as in alcoholic drinks; because we cannot engrave *total abstinence* upon the former, as upon the latter. Still, let us not despair of being able to mark the limits of temperance in respect to food. For if God has commanded us to practice it, he has doubtless given us the means of ascertaining the precise nature of our duty.

*I. In the first place, it is intemperance to consume a greater quantity of food than is necessary to give the most perfect and permanent health, and the greatest amount of vigor to the body and the mind.*

This proposition will probably commend itself at once to every unprejudiced mind. For what appears to have been the principal design of Providence in furnishing us with organs of digestion? - What, but to furnish the body and the mind with the most perfect health and vigor? True, there is connected with the process no small degree of gratification; and hence some have foolishly presumed it was the intention of Providence that man should indulge his appetite beyond what mere health and strength demand, for the sake of the pleasure. But the real fact is, that this cannot be done without diminishing the pleasure. For all such extra gratification of the appetite deranges more or less those organs that are the seat of the pleasure; and hence, although the gratification may be for a moment heightened, it is in turn proportionably diminished. In other words, an appetite more or less artificial is thus created; and this is always liable to morbid obtuseness, as well as morbid acuteness, whilst a natural, unsophisticated appetite, affords uniform and permanent pleasure. It is a fair inference, therefore, that the amount of food, which nature alone demands for repairing her wastes and invigorating the bodily and intellectual powers, will afford a greater amount of unmixed gratification than a larger quantity.

This reasoning has been amply confirmed by the testimony of numbers in every age. For amid the general excess that has at all times prevailed, individuals have adopted the rule given above. Most of the ancient philosophers, particularly the Pythagoreans, were indebted in a great measure to their moderation in food and drink, for their health, serenity, and long life. Many of the early Christians lived long and happy, although in banishment, upon an allowance of but twelve ounces of bread a day, and only water for drink. In more modern times, individuals in every condition of life, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, clergymen and laymen, physicians and philosophers, have added their testimony to that of antiquity, in respect to the happy influence of strict temperance. There is no dissenting voice to the conclusion, that the nearer they have come in the quantity of their food to the amount requisite for the most perfect bodily and mental health, the greater has been their enjoyment, even of the pleasures of the table. This will sound paradoxical in the ears of one addicted to excess. But he has only to make the experiment faithfully, to be prepared to add his testimony to that of others. Some, by imperfectly, and partially, and hesitatingly trying the experiment, have come to a different conclusion. But had they prosecuted it long enough to bring back their appetites, in any degree, to a natural state; long enough to have acquired a relish for the pleasures of temperance, their voices would have mingled in the praises of that system, which forbids the stomach to be called to any labor not necessary to health and strength.

Again: a larger quantity of food than the health and strength demand, will produce a disproportionate exercise and development of the bodily and mental powers. God has given to the human constitution a remarkable power of conforming itself to circumstances; and thus, of sustaining, with far less injury than

might be anticipated, the vicissitudes to which it is exposed. Hence it is, that men of intemperate habits, in respect to food, drink, or employment, not unfrequently hold out beyond all expectation; and their cases excite in many minds a suspicion, that such habits are far less injurious than is generally represented. But how is it that the system is able thus to sustain itself amid these injurious influences? One method is, by the production of a disproportionate strength and development in the organ that is most severely tasked, at the expense of the other organs; or, in the language of the apostle, God hath tempered the body together - that the members should have the same care one for another. This curious sympathy induces all the members to lend a portion of their strength to any one of their number, that has more labor to perform than the rest. The consequence is, that the organ thus assisted, will acquire an increase of ability for its appropriate work, while the others will be proportionably weakened. Thus, if we require the stomach to digest more food than health and strength demand, that organ will lay a tax upon its fellows, for the additional power requisite for the increased labor: and if the additional burden continue to be imposed, the stomach will acquire a permanent power of sustaining it, by proportionably weakening the other organs. A person has only to observe his feelings after a hearty meal, to have a fair illustration of this principle. He finds himself indisposed to effort; his senses become less acute; and a disposition to sleep succeeds; just because the muscles, the senses, and the brain, have suspended their activity, in order to lend assistance to the overloaded digestive organs. And not until the stomach is relieved by their aid, can they resume their own proper work. And since the operations of the mind are dependent on the state of the senses and the brain, it is obvious that the intellectual faculties must be injured by having their resources thus called off to help the overloaded stomach. Accordingly we find, that most men, after a hearty meal, are almost entirely disqualified for rigorous mental application. And if, at such a time, either the muscles, the senses, or the mind are roused by extraordinary effort to labor, digestion is in a great measure suspended, and the whole system receives an injury.

Now to say nothing of the ultimate effect upon the health of this disproportionate exercise and development of the different organs and powers, who can believe, that it does not mar the human character? For does not the perfection of that character consist in a just and proportionate cultivation and exhibition of all the bodily and mental powers? At least, can we believe that God gave to the human system this wonderful power of adapting itself to the exigencies of its condition, in order that the nobler faculties should be impoverished to give the digestive energies a predominance which neither health nor strength require? What is this but to make the higher part of our nature a slave to the inferior? to live in order to eat, instead of eating to live? We see how gross and debasing this principle is, when exhibited in the shameless glutton, whose whole bodily and mental energies are made the mere panders of his stomach. But if the foregoing reasoning be correct, I see not why the least addition to the quantity of food needful to health and strength, does not lay a tax to the amount of the excess, upon the organs and powers thus called upon to aid the stomach. Admit that a larger quantity of food may not at once impair the health perceptibly; yet it cannot be indulged in without diminishing the bodily energy, and intellectual clearness and strength. God never intended that such a sacrifice as this should be made to a bodily appetite. It is gross sin, therefore, to make it.

But not unfrequently the man whose diet is of the richest and most stimulating kind, and who follows no rule as to quantity but the demands of hunger, enjoys vigorous health, and a fullness and energy of muscle, unknown to the cautious observer of dietetic rules.

Here is exhibited another method by which the animal system adapts itself to peculiar circumstances. All the bodily organs may, indeed, be more fully developed in this way; but not without shortening the duration of life. The stimulus of rich food in large quantity, urges on all the powers of life with

accelerated steps: but the effect will be to wear them out the sooner; and hence it is, that men of this description, whose constitutions seem capable for a while of resisting almost everything injurious, whose frames are athletic, and whose countenances are flushed with health, fail at length so suddenly and so early. Can it be, that God intended man should thus prematurely exhaust his energies, when the only advantage would be, a short-lived vigor, which, even if more favorable to physical efforts, must ever be a clog to the mental operations? Is it not obviously a needless waste of those precious energies, with which the human constitution is endowed for sustaining itself in unavoidable and trying exigencies? Is longevity a blessing of so little importance so as to be thus unnecessarily sacrificed?

The manner in which an excess of nourishment taken into the system operates to shorten life is generally but little known. The fact is, it prepares the constitution for the attacks of disease upon slight exposures to any morbid influences; such as inclement weather, or fatiguing labors of body or mind: and it weakens the power of resisting those attacks. When the digestive organs are called upon to perform extra labors, they cannot perform the work as thoroughly as when not overtaken; and consequently they cannot send the food into the system so perfectly prepared for nourishment, as they might do, with a less quantity. This is one source of disease. Again, the additional task demanded of these organs, requires a draft to be made upon that secret strength of the constitution, which is reserved for resisting disease and meeting other exigencies. That elasticity of the system, by which rigid temperance enables it to repel the first onset of disease, is thus more or less weakened; and the foe easily fastens his talons in the victim. Nor can all the stimulants of the physician bring back, or create anew, the lost energies of temperance, to repel the invader. Multitudes in this way sink early into the grave, and are regarded by the community as the unfortunate victims of diseases that have pounced upon them like birds of prey; whereas, their intemperance has invited the fatal disorder and taken away the power of resisting it.

In extreme cases, all men see disease and death to be the consequence of excess. But what reason can be given, why any amount of food, not required by health and strength, will not operate in the same way, to induce disease and weaken the power of resistance? And if this be in deed true, why is it not intemperance to indulge the appetite beyond the demands of bodily and mental health?

Finally; if we take not this standard as to the quantity of our food, then we have left us no other guide, but appetite. For if you say that we are not bound to limit our amount of food by the actual requirement of the system, for health and strength, then I ask, how much more than this may we take? You will admit that there may be excess in eating, and that the devoted glutton is intemperate. But will you lay your finger on the precise point, between what the system demands, and the excesses of gluttony, to which we may indulge our appetites. You say, perhaps, that we should be temperate, but not excessively abstemious. But what do you mean by being temperate? If you cannot tell me how far my appetite may be indulged, then I say, I will indulge it to the extent of its calls; nor do I see how you can regard me as intemperate, even though I emulate the grossest gormand. For you say that I may indulge that appetite beyond what the strength and health of the system requires; and yet you give me no rule for determining the limits of that indulgence. What guide have I then, but my appetite? And if I may follow this, how can you condemn the most voracious glutton, who certainly never indulges beyond the calls of appetite?

But is it any easier to determine how much food is necessary for the health and strength, than to ascertain the precise limits between moderate and immoderate indulgence? I admit that the balances will not in general settle this question: since there is no small difference among different constitutions, in the power of abstracting nourishment from the same amount of food; and there are also very various quantities of nourishment in equal weights of different sorts of food. But it is not very difficult to

determine the amount of food demanded by nature, if we will but carefully attend to its effects on the system. *Any discomfort of body, says a distinguished physician, any irritability or despondency of mind, succeeding food and drink, at the distance of an hour, a day, or even two or three days, may be regarded, (other evident causes being absent,) as a presumptive proof that the quantity has been too much, or the quality injurious. - If a few hours after his dinner he feel a sense of distension in the stomach and bowels, or any of the symptoms of indigestion, which have been pointed out; if he feel a languor of body, or a cloudiness of the mind; if he have a restless night; if he experience a depression of spirits, or irritability of temper next morning; his repast has been too much, or improper in kind, and he must reduce and simplify till he come to that quantity and quality of food and drink for dinner, which will produce little or no alteration in his feelings, whether of exhilaration immediately after dinner, or of discomfort some hours after this meal.* These remarks, though having reference only to dinner, the principal meal of the day, will apply with the same force to every other repast; as will also the testimony of one, who, to the age of upwards of a hundred years, had experienced the happy effects of an attention to this rule. *My spirits, says he, are not injured by what I eat; they are only revived and supported by it. I can, immediately on rising from the table, set myself to write or study, and never find that this application, though so hurtful to hearty feeders, does me any harm. And besides, I never find myself drowsy after dinner, as a great many do. The reason is, I feed so temperately as never to load my stomach, or oppress my nerves; so that I am always as light, active, and cheerful, after dinner as before.*

In attempting to make an application of this rule, for determining the necessary quantity of food, it ought to be recollected that many in good health and of laborious habits in the open air, have found that about 20 ounces of solid nourishing food, have been an ample daily allowance; and that invalids, and those of sedentary habits, have needed only from 12 to 16 ounces. Let then persons of these characters, commence with about these quantities, and afterwards increase or diminish them according to their effects, as they have now been described. In this way, they will ere long learn the amount which their constitutions need; and to this they must resolutely adhere, if they would avoid the guilt of intemperance, and escape that *blackness of darkness*, which, in that context, is threatened against those who, knowing their duty, still persist in *feeding themselves without fear*.

#### SERMON CLXIV

Jude 12 - *Feeding themselves without fear.*

*II. In pursuing the subject of the preceding discourse, I next remark, that it is intemperance to use food of such a quality, as to injure the digestive organs, and oppress the intellectual and moral powers.*

No reasonable man will hesitate a moment to admit this proposition in the abstract. For to derange the digestive organs is to induce disease and death; and to oppress the intellectual and moral powers, is to pervert the object of our existence. And surely, if the use of any particular quality of food makes such havoc with our best interests, to employ it is sinful intemperance. Yet here too, the grand difficulty lies in the entire ignorance, or erroneous opinions of the great majority of respectable and Christian men, on the subject. Hence in respect to the quality, as well as quantity of food, *they feed themselves without fear*.

It is a well established principle among medical writers, that *the more simply life is supported, and the less stimulus we use, the better*. What a sad comment on this principle does the practice of nearly all

mankind present! In the great mass of the community, the natural appetite is so completely perverted, or rather destroyed, that all relish for simple food and drink is gone: nay, such nourishment is regarded as even unhealthy, and incapable of sustaining life and vigor. Although, for example, water is the most salubrious of all kinds of drink, and the only fluid that can answer all the purposes of drink, and, therefore, the best calculated for health and strength, yet few persons feel as if it were tolerable, without the admixture of something stimulating: and it really excites the surprise of most men, to be told of an individual, who drinks nothing but water, and is yet strong and healthy.

Milk is another substance, expressly designed by the Creator to answer every purpose of nourishment, with the least tax upon the digestive and assimilating organs. And accordingly it furnishes almost the only food in the early and most delicate stages of existence. But by the great majority of adults it is regarded with disgust; it disagrees with them. And the reason is, they have so long substituted hot and stimulating fluids, such as tea and coffee, wine and spirit, for this simple fluid, that when the usual stimulus is abstracted, the stomach, like a jaded beast of burden, refuses to act. And thus the two substances, which the Creator provided expressly for fluid aliment, have, by habit, come to be regarded as altogether unfit for use, unless mixed with stimulating materials, never intended for food.

A like hurtful and unnatural change is produced upon another class of articles, which, in their simple state, God prepared for the principal support of man: I mean the different sorts of grain and roots, from which bread is prepared. It is a settled principle in dietetics, that food in a form rather coarse, is best adapted to the organs designed for its reception. Yet is it regarded as an object of the first importance, at the present day, to prepare all farinaceous articles in as concentrated a form as possible; to extract from the wheat, for example, only its finest and whitest portions. But this is only a commencement of the perverting process. For here cookery comes in, with its refinements, lays under contribution the four quarters of the globe for condiments, and employs the flour, only as a receptacle of all manner of indigestible aromatics, oils, and sweets; so that the cake and the pastry, in their countless varieties, which hence result, are as compound and unnatural, and I may add, as injurious to the system, as possible.

A no less injurious system of cookery is applied to the preparation of almost every other article of food. Not that cookery of a simple kind is unfriendly to health. On the contrary, when it merely softens, or dissolves the food, so as to assist the organs of digestion, it is eminently salutary. But when its chief object is to tempt the appetite, by compound and stimulating dishes, it deserves the reprobation of every Christian and patriot. But at the present day, how few are the Christians, or the patriots, who do not employ this very system in the preparation of their food, without even a suspicion that it is injurious! The various kinds of meat, which Providence permits man to use, in their simple state, how are they loaded with condiments and stuffings, and made to swim in gravies, and thus rendered pernicious to any but the strongest powers of digestion; and how must not only the bodily organs, but the noble powers of the soul also, suspend their operations, while the stomach is laboring and struggling to master the incongruous mixture! In short, how little of the food which is used by the higher classes of society, is not so compounded, and rendered indigestible by oils, aromatics, sweets, and acids, as to be quite disagreeable to the man, whose appetite has never been perverted by indulgence!

One fact in relation to invalids, exhibits still farther evidence, how erroneous are the prevalent opinions as to the quality of food. It is these very injurious mixtures, that cookery has invented, which the greater part of men will offer to the feeble, as best suited to their condition! They need, it is thought, these rich and nourishing dishes, to keep up their strength; and the invalid himself, also, is soon persuaded that they agree with him best, because they gratify most his morbid appetite; forgetful, that it is the

digestion of food, and not the eating of it, that sustains and invigorates the system; and that it may be as absurd to give cake, pastry, and stimulating meats, to the feeble, as it is to load the horse or the ox with a heavier burthen, because he is weak or fatigued.

The quality of food is greatly and even chemically different, at different temperatures, and at different periods after its preparation. And a perverted and morbid appetite often relishes it in that state when it is most unhealthy and oppressive. Hence it is, that the great mass of the community, unconscious of the injury they receive, must sip their tea and coffee almost at a boiling temperature; and hot rolls, hot cakes, hot bread, and melted butter, constitute no small part of their diet. The morbid feelings that follow sometime after, are imputed to other causes; nor can even the invalid, in many cases, be made to believe that food, in such a state, and at such temperatures, is injurious.

But I have given enough - probably many will say, too many and too specific illustrations - of what I mean by that quality of food, which renders it injurious to the animal system, and destructive to the mind. I appeal to the highest medical authorities in proof that these illustrations are neither visionary nor overdrawn. And I appeal to the conscience of every Christian, whose case they describe, to ponder well, whether it be not criminal intemperance, thus to pamper a depraved appetite, at such an enormous expense?

*III. In the third place, to indulge in more than one dish or course at a meal, is intemperance.*

This assertion will doubtless be startling to many; because it aims a blow so directly at their practice. But let the principle be well understood and weighed, before it is rejected.

The first inquiry will be, what constitutes a single dish? It may strictly be defined, any simple article of food, cooked in such a manner as to be most conducive to health and strength. Or perhaps there would be no great objection to giving more latitude of definition, so as to include a mixture of different kinds of food and condiments, suitably made before eating, or when eating. It ought, however, to be remembered, that these compound dishes may be of such a quality, as to oppress the digestive organs and the intellect; and their use thus become real intemperance. But in practice, there will be little difficulty in distinguishing between different dishes. At every meal, there is commonly some principal article of food, with its proper accompaniments, calculated to furnish a substantial repast. This is to be regarded as one dish; and when one course of meat succeeds another, or the pudding succeeds the meat, or the cake and pastry follows the whole, there is what we mean by variety of dishes. Now, I contend, that the use of more than one of these at a single meal, is intemperance.

In the first place, more than one dish is unnecessary for health, strength, or enjoyment.

Nearly every kind of food, that is abundant and widely diffused, whether vegetable or animal, contains all those elementary principles that are essential to nourish the system. For although nitrogen is wanting in most vegetables, yet the organs of nutrition appear to possess the means of obtaining this principle from other sources, when it does not exist in the food. Why then is more than one sort of food necessary at the same meal, to secure health and strength? For even if different kinds be requisite for a full development of the bodily organs, the object can be most completely accomplished, by using these various kinds at different meals. Indeed, most dishes, as modern cookery prepares them, contain not a little variety, abundantly sufficient to make up for any apprehended deficiency of a particular kind, on nutritive principles.



As to the comparative enjoyment in eating of one dish, or many dishes, experience is the only decisive test. And I hesitate not to say, that everyone, who fairly makes the experiment, will prefer decidedly the single dish. For though a succession of courses, temptingly prepared, may produce a keen relish for the various dishes, yet, as is the case with every natural pleasure which is heightened by artificial excitement, the subsequent langor, stupidity, and nervousness, are an immense drawback upon the enjoyment. There is also an irregularity in the appetite of him who indulges in variety of dishes, which the man rarely experiences, who is contented with one. This single simple dish, always relishes; affording not indeed ecstatic pleasure, but uniform and real enjoyment: so that in the end, the amount exceeds that of the man who gratifies the cravings of a morbid appetite. To those who view this conclusion as erroneous, I have only to say, make the trial for some time, and you will be better able to judge of the matter than you now are.

Secondly, a variety of dishes at the same meal, oppresses the digestive organs; and by consequence, all the corporeal and intellectual powers. To use different articles of food in the stomach - except so far as a simple and healthy system of cookery requires - increases the difficulty of digestion, inasmuch as the solution of a compound is more difficult than that of a simple. For although digestion be not merely a solution, it is a solution; and as different substances are dissolved with various degrees of facility in the chemist's laboratory, so it is in this laboratory of the body. Hence physicians in every age, have testified to the injurious commotion produced in the stomach by an incongruous mixture. And that organ does not suffer without a deep sympathetic affection of all the related parts; (and what part in the system is not related?) hence the uneasiness and stupor that follows the feast: and hence too, the premature decay of him, who indulges in variety at the table. For in proportion as the organs are compelled to increase their labors, to master the heterogeneous mixture, which the free liver imposes upon them, will their energies be exhausted.

Finally, a variety of dishes at one meal, presents an almost certain temptation to excess in the quantity of food. Why do men wish for more than one substantial course of food at a meal? Just because they have eaten enough of the first dish - that is, as much as natural appetite requires; and the second dish creates a new and artificial appetite. And when this begins to flag, it is renewed by the excitement of a third dish; and thus is this stimulating system carried on, through a succession of courses, until abused nature can no longer be roused.

If this be a true account of the matter, where is the man of ordinary resolution that can resist the temptation to excess in his quantity of food, in the midst of the variety of enticing dishes that he meets at almost every table? Excess! what is it but excess, to indulge in a second dish, after one has eaten enough, of the first? It is, indeed, this variety of dishes, more than everything else, that has deluged society with intemperance in respect to food; and substituted, in the place of natural appetite, an artificial, inordinate, capricious craving for the thousand most compound and most unhealthy mixtures of modern cookery. And yet, so insidiously has this monstrous abuse of the gifts of God crept in, that even the devoted Christian can daily spread his table with a host of these needless and expensive varieties of food, and indulge in them to repletion, without even a suspicion that he is as really breaking down prematurely his constitution of body, and besotting his mind, as the reeling drunkard in the streets. And this wretched delusion will continue, until men learn to make out their repast from a single dish. But the adoption of this principle would be almost as effectual, for securing temperance in respect to food, as total abstinence is, in respect to ardent spirit.

*IV. A man may be intemperate by the time and manner of partaking of his food.*

Even if he adhere to the strict rules of temperance as to quantity, quality, and variety, he may take the allotted portion at such times, or in such a manner, as to oppress the stomach, and thus stupify the mind: and to do this when it can be avoided, is obviously intemperance, as really as to do the same injury by an excessive quantity; or a deleterious quality, or variety. He may have no regular times for his meals; and at one period impose a new task upon the digestive organs before the previous one is completed; and at another, delay so long to satisfy the demands of nature, that more than human strength will be requisite to resist its cravings for an inordinate quantity.

Some delay their principal meal till night; and thus put the digestive organs to their severest work, when, with the rest of the body, they need repose. The immediate effects are, disturbed sleep and despondency, irritability and indisposition to mental effort in the morning: and the ultimate result is premature failure, both of body and mind.

Others, particularly invalids, acquire the injurious habit of interrupting the process of digestion, by luncheons between meals; because perhaps they have a sense of faintness, which they mistake for hunger; which receives a present relief, though an ultimate aggravation from food.

That portion of the community in every country, who have departed the least from nature in their modes of living, and who enjoy the most vigorous health, are in the habit of taking their principal meal about the middle of the day; and two other repasts, about six hours before and after noon. Generally about that space of time is demanded by the stomach to perform its task and to enjoy a little rest preparatory to resuming its work. Intervening luncheons and collations, not only retard the regular operations of that organ, but deprive it of all opportunity of resting; and thus as surely wear it out early, as premature prostration will follow the incessant occupation of any other organ.

Three meals per day seem then to be the greatest number that can be indulged in without a violation of the laws of health. And that monstrous perversion of nature, now so common, especially in cities, by which breakfast takes the place of dinner, dinner that of supper, and supper that of sleep, can be regarded only as intemperance of the most open and unblushing character. God shows how he views it, by visiting those guilty of it, with bodily and mental imbecility, and by sending them to a premature grave.

The sedentary and the feeble violate the rules of health, by indulging in the use of meat two or three times each day. So stimulating a diet may perhaps be borne, for a considerable time, by the hardy laborer; but it goads on with feverish violence the powers of the invalid and the sedentary: and though the hectic glow thus produced, may give them the impression that the practice is salutary, early and fatal prostration is the common and painful result.

Great bodily exertion is apt to give much increase to the appetite: and hence do most men, in such cases, and especially when journeying, give a full rein to appetite: whereas the stomach is then in an unfavorable state for grappling even with its ordinary task. For it needs rest, like the other parts of the system. Multitudes are rewarded for thus violating a law of their constitution, by the morbid feelings which intemperance in food always brings in its train; and the invalid's journey for health, often proves on this account, but the means of aggravating his complaints.

Not a few are in the habit of indulging in as full and stimulating a diet during the debilitating months of the spring and summer, as when the constitution is braced by the cold of winter; and as the effects of

this species of intemperance, chronic diseases gradually creep on, or autumnal disorders prostrate the system at once.

Providence has given to man, as well as other animals, most convenient instruments for the thorough mastication of food; and all animals, except man, make thorough use of the teeth for this purpose. The ravenous, artificial appetite which man acquires, does not allow him to wait for the performance of this preliminary to digestion; and he thus imposes a double task upon the stomach. Of what avail will it be to be rigidly abstemious in the quantity, quality, and variety of our food, if we thus require of one organ, the labor which appropriately belongs to another?

The strongly excited state of mind, under which many partake of their food, powerfully contributes to their hurried manner of crowding it, without mastication, into the stomach. And this mental excitement is doubly injurious, by weakening the power of the digestive organs, on the principle already explained, that when any one part of the system is severely tasked, the other parts will suspend their functions in a degree, that they may lend it a sort of sympathetic assistance.

Another mode in which men ignorantly practice intemperance in eating, is by receiving food when they have no appetite. Hunger is the signal by which nature indicates her need of food; and if no such signal be given, she will not be ready, by her appropriate organs, to convert the food which we crowd upon her - however rich and stimulating - into nourishment. But we are apt to mistake an uneasy sensation of the stomach for real hunger; and then we inevitably oppress the system, if we impose food upon that organ.

Such are the principal modes in which man may be guilty of intemperance in diet. In conclusion, I make a single inference, viz. *That intemperance in eating is alarmingly prevalent.*

Those who admit the correctness of my description of what constitutes this kind of intemperance, will need no argument to establish the inference. For it will force itself upon their notice among all classes of society, and almost every time that food is taken. Nor is the intemperance of so slight a character as to deserve little notice, or reprehension. It meets us everywhere in giant bulk and grossness; although an unknown god to the great mass of its votaries. It is reputable to be intemperate; it is considered no blot on the Christian character. Nay, to be temperate is thought by many of the best of men, to be injuriously abstemious, or meanly parsimonious. The eyes of men in every age, and in almost every country, have been most deeply blinded on this subject; so that the great mass of the population, even of the wise and the good, have conscientiously encouraged intemperance, by their example and influence. But in no period of the world has this intemperance probably prevailed so universally, among all who are not too poor to obtain the means, as at the present. The community begin to be aware of the true nature and effects of excess in drinking; but very few have any suspicion, that, *in the aggregate, greater evils result from excess in eating.*

*It has been thought, says Dr. Fothergill, of London, that more people suffer by hard drinking than immoderate eating; but my observation leads me to take the opposite side.*

*In general, says Dr. Franklin, mankind, since the improvement of cookery, eat about twice as much as nature requires.*

*Intemperance of some kind, says Lord Bacon, destroys the bulk of mankind.*

*In polished nations, says Sir John Sinclair, men commonly eat at least double the quantity of food necessary, and often four or five times more than they ought to do.*

*It may with truth be asserted, says a distinguished German physician, that the greater part of mankind eat more than is necessary; and by being crammed and overfed in infancy, we are deprived of that natural sensation which ought to tell us when we have enough.*

*All our most eminent physicians agree in this one point, says an American physician, that as a people we eat far too much hearty food.*

*Almost every man, woman and child in our country, says another of our medical writers, habitually eats and drinks twice as much every day, on a moderate estimate, as is necessary.*

Do these opinions seem extravagant? Let us apply the first rule as to diet, given in these discourses, to the general practice of mankind. Where is the man, who will testify that he feels no *languor of body, no cloudiness of mind*, after dinner? Who can say with Cornaro, *I can immediately on rising from the table, set myself to write or study - and I never find myself drowsy after dinner as a great many do*? Let the laboring man for one day, weigh out twenty ounces of solid food, and the sedentary and literary man sixteen ounces, and compare these quantities with their usual allowance; and they will see the reason of their bodily and mental torpor. Or rather, they will see that they are in the habit of eating two or three times more than the average amount, which a great variety of men, in different situations and occupations, have found abundantly sufficient for health and strength.

Let the dietetic habits of the community be tested by the second rule; or that which relates to the quality of food. Who is satisfied with unmixed water, the most healthy of all fluids, for drink? How are sea and land compassed to provide wines, ale, acids, alkalies, aromatics, and various vegetable principles, to impart stimulating properties to this simple beverage? although all these additions - however agreeable to the palate - serve only to make more labor for the physical organs; because these ingredients must all be separated from the water again, before that fluid can be converted into nourishment. Who does not feel himself reduced to an intolerable degree of abstemiousness, if compelled to make out even a single meal, from what is called coarse food, cooked in a simple manner, with the addition of no stimulus, except that one condiment, which all animated nature seems to crave - common salt? If no rich gravies and sauces excite the appetite, if no compound pastry, cake, or, other article of dessert, appear upon the table, how disappointed and churlish the guests? And all this, not because such simple food is not abundantly sufficient for health, strength, and happiness; but because the appetite is perverted, and excess has become a habit.

Apply the third rule, or that relating to variety in food, to the habits of living among all classes in this land; and you will see how wide spread is intemperance. For not even the poorest among us are content with a single dish, however excellent: and few in this country are so poor as not to have the means of gratifying their palate. As you ascend through the different classes of society, on the pecuniary scale, the evil rises in magnitude, until you reach the formal city feast. The really temperate man, however, will find it frightful enough among the middle classes in society. The sober industrious farmer, or mechanic, who is complaining grievously of the difficulty of obtaining a subsistence, will yet look upon you as beside yourself, if you suggest to him that he might profitably substitute a single dish, for the two, three, or four that are usually on his board. Even the man of letters will smile incredulous, when you tell him that a single dish would give him far greater ability for intellectual labor, than a succession of courses. And the conscientious devoted Christian, nay the holy minister of the meek and lowly Jesus, would

sooner part with a right hand, or a right eye, than the unnecessary and injurious second and third courses and desserts, that now often make his afternoons seasons of yawning, sleeping, and stupidity, instead of cheerfulness and vigorous effort.

Our boarding houses and hotels furnish another exhibition of the demand in the community for variety. That establishment would instantly be abandoned, which should spread a table on the true principles of temperance; and generally an eating house is regarded as excellent, in proportion to the variety and richness of the food which it furnishes.

The dietetic excesses of social visits, all over the land, present another form of this crying evil. To crowd upon our friends, as is done everywhere, a great variety of the richest and most indigestible kinds of food and fruit, is a monstrous perversion of the design of social entertainments: turns them into mere scenes of banqueting; unfits those invited for profitable intercourse; excites a spirit of unholy emulation to excel in the splendor and variety of entertainments, and induces multitudes to live beyond their income. And these effects, to say nothing of injured health, are abundantly realized in the community. Social visits, instead of *the feast of reason and the flow of soul*, are becoming epicurean revels: and instead of promoting health, and giving new vigor for labors of body and mind, they are followed by the prostration of both. Is it not astonishing that Christians should ever tolerate such glaring abuse of a most beneficial custom, without feeling a single reproof of conscience! Can they, in this day of light, continue to do it ignorantly?

The fourth rule as to diet, which we have considered, if compared with prevailing customs, would compel us to write intemperance on almost every door, especially in our cities and large towns. How many have so changed the hours of eating, as to impose the principal task upon the stomach in the evening, when it ought to be at rest! How many are not content with even three meals per day; but with luncheons and collations make out four or five, and the last one often late at night! What havoc of flesh do we witness among the sedentary and even invalids; not once merely, but twice, or even thrice a day; and that too, during the heats of summer! With what canine fury do we see multitudes seize their food, and hurry it into the stomach half masticated, as if the teeth were intended only for seizing, and not at all for grinding the food! *Eating too fast*, says a medical traveler, *may be set down as one of our national peculiarities, as every foreigner on first coming among us is forcibly struck with the rapid manner in which we devour our food.*

Thus widely, thus universally, I had almost said, does intemperance in food prevail: thus deep are the delusions by which even the best of men are held in this ignominious bondage. What hope, then, that the feeble note of remonstrance which I raise, will be heeded by the cold ear of unbelief, amid the deafening clamors of appetite! What hope that such a public opinion against this species of intemperance can ever be formed, as is now spreading its healthful current over the land, and putting out the wild fire which ardent spirit has kindled! True the prospect is dark; but a few beams of hope penetrate the gloom. The great change that has taken place in respect to ardent spirit, among Christians and patriots, may be regarded as the precursor of a similar change in respect to food. For to produce it, there needs only an application to diet, of the same sober and rational principles which have convinced so many that total abstinence from ardent spirit is a duty. And men, who have a high sense of moral obligation, will make this application, so soon as they see their inconsistency, and hear the remonstrances of conscience. Indeed, not a few, here and there, are already making the application, and have commenced earnestly and successfully the glorious and happy reformation. But, after all, faint indeed would be the prospect of its advancement, did we believe that human strength and resolution only would be employed. Yet may we confidently trust, that this is a cause which lies near the heart of

*Him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* He, therefore, will make it triumphant. For we may rest assured, that his designs respecting human happiness and millennial glory can never be accomplished, TILL UNIVERSAL TEMPERANCE PREVAIL.

(The subject to be continued.)

## Sermon 505 The Consequences of Intemperance in Eating

["Consequences of Intemperance in Eating,"  
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### CONSEQUENCES OF INTEMPERANCE IN EATING

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SERMON CLXVII

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 AND NATURAL HISTORY IN AMHERST COLLEGE

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### CONSEQUENCES OF INTEMPERANCE IN EATING

*Proverbs xxiii. 2. Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.*

This is Solomon's direction to one who is tempted to indulge in eating to excess. And it means, either that a man in such circumstances, should feel as if a knife were at his throat, to give him a mortal wound if he yielded to the temptation; or, that it would be better for him to put a knife to his throat, than to indulge his appetite immoderately. Understood either way, it forcibly represents *the dangerous consequences of excess in diet*. To exhibit these consequences, is my object in this discourse.

I. Let us consider the effects of this kind of excess *on the physical character*.

The peculiar influence of alcoholic mixtures, whether ardent spirit, or wine, it is not my design to depict: but merely the effects of those articles, whether fluid or solid, that are commonly taken for nourishment.

There are two articles of drink, viz. tea and coffee, so extensively used, and regarded as affording nourishment, that a few words seem necessary concerning them: though I intend not here a full discussion as to their use. But the true nature of their operation on the system ought to be understood. And there is no longer any intelligent physician, or chemist, who maintains, that, apart from the substances with which they are mixed when taken, there is derived from them the least nourishment. They operate precisely like alcohol, (except that they do not intoxicate,) by stimulating the nervous

system; and thus rouse into action the strength of the constitution: but they impart to it no new strength. Hence it is, that those addicted to their use, are apt to resort to them with greater frequency, and to make the decoction stronger and stronger, just as is the case with those who habitually employ alcohol. Hence too it is, that the feeble and nervous are affected by their use with tremors, palpitations of the heart, and a frequent sense of sinking and debility, after their excitement is over. Hence too, the frequent headache of such persons, which, for a time, is relieved by a free use of the substances that produced it, in the same manner as the horrid prostration of the intemperate man is relieved by a resort to the stimulating bowl, which will once more rouse up his energies only to sink still lower. Hence too, the sleeplessness, at night, and the stupor and heaviness that oppress the system in the morning, until a repetition of the use arouses the organs to new efforts.

That these substances exert a salutary influence, occasionally as medicines, cannot be doubted. But it is no less certain, that their habitual use produces, in most constitutions, in a greater or less degree, the effects that have been mentioned. Hence a distinguished French physician says, that they should be used only in those circumstances, when it is proper to use fermented or distilled liquors. Yet how wide spread and enormous their use! During the year 1831, more than three hundred million pounds of coffee were consumed in Europe and America; and fifty millions in the United States: and as many pounds of tea among us, as we have inhabitants. Surely their effects cannot be small, either upon the health, or the pecuniary resources of the community. And if water be a decidedly better beverage, the inquiry certainly deserves the serious attention of every man, and especially of every Christian, whether both worldly and religious motives do not demand an abandonment of these luxuries.

But to dwell no longer on a point that will probably be so unwelcome to most of the community, I proceed to point out the physical effects of excess in the use of articles really nourishing, when used temperately.

This excess produces sometimes grossness of appearance and obesity, and sometimes a haggard aspect and an emaciation of the frame. Fleshiness and a gross countenance are commonly regarded as resulting from excess, either in eating or drinking; and in most cases this is a correct inference. But very few are aware, of what is probably true, that the most usual effect of over-eating is excessive leanness and a pale squalid aspect. The digestive organs, being overloaded, are unable to convert any part of the food they receive into healthy nourishment: the consequence is, that the body is famished, not through a deficiency, but by an excess of food. In other constitutions, the superabundance is converted into fat; which must be regarded, generally, as a secretion more or less of a morbid character.

That this is a true view of the subject, fair experiments will show. Let the too fleshy man reduce the quantity, and simplify the quality of his food, and employ a proper proportion of exercise, and he will soon be reduced to a healthy standard. And let the emaciated man who has no actual disease upon him, do the same; and when he takes only that quantity and quality of food which his digestive organs can master with pleasure, he will generally find his muscles attaining gradually the strength and fullness of health. This is, indeed, directly contrary to the course that is usually taken: but it is nevertheless the course which medical philosophy and experience point out. A man becomes emaciated and feeble, and the conclusion he and his friends naturally draw, is, that he needs only a greater quantity, or more nourishing quality of food, to restore him; whereas what he needs is to give rest to his digestive organs, that they may gain strength to convert food into nourishment. And this rest can be obtained only by reducing the daily task imposed upon them.

Another physical effect of excessive eating, is muscular torpidity. This is exemplified in that indisposition to exertion, and tendency to sleep, which every man feels after a very hearty meal. The slightest effort



seems an insupportable burthen: everything, indeed, except sleep, is burdensome. The reason of this torpidity I have explained in a former discourse. The muscles, the senses, and the brain, must in a greater or less degree, suspend their proper work, in order that the energies of the system may be concentrated in the stomach. This is the reason that many are in the habit of deferring the principal meal of the day till their active efforts are over; for they have found, that after dinner it is no easy matter to bring the voluntary muscles into action; and multitudes suppose this sluggish state of the system is the necessary result of taking food, and have no idea that when only a temperate quantity of food is taken, the system is refreshed and invigorated, instead of being oppressed; and that it is excess only that is succeeded by torpidity. True, a man may be so much fatigued before dinner that nature will demand repose: or his drowsiness may result from a feeble state of health; but with these exceptions, the torpidity subsequent to meals, is to be imputed to criminal excess.

It often happens, that while the muscles are thus rendered inactive by their sympathy with the digestive powers, the nervous system is unduly excited. Hence the uneasiness that often follows a too hearty meal; and hence too, the extreme irritability and crabbedness of the glutton, when not buried in sleep, or *feeding himself without fear* at the table of luxury.

It is natural to infer, that if the digestive powers have a severer task imposed upon them than nature intended, they will only imperfectly execute their office. The consequence must be, a greater or less derangement of the system; since imperfect blood must produce imperfect nourishment. Thus the way is prepared for disease; or rather, this is sowing the seeds of disease, which, in such a soil, will soon spring up, and flourish in rank luxuriance. The common opinions as to the origin of diseases are exceedingly incorrect. When attacked by severe and violent disorders, it is rare that any one thinks of looking farther than to the slight exposure or fatigue that developed the complaint, but was by no means its cause. The fact is, the constitution in most cases is a long while preparing for sickness before it comes; and in a majority of instances, that preparation consists, either in unnecessary expenses of vital energy, or in intemperance in drink or food; and in such cases, certainly the cause is sinful, so that sometimes, a man who dies with a fever, or the apoplexy, may be as criminal as he who terminates his days by the pistol. All feel this to be true in the case of the drunkard. But why is it not equally true of him, who through excess in food, prepares his system to be invaded and overcome by disease?

When a man overloads his digestive powers, every part of the system sympathises with them, and lends a helping hand to sustain the burden. - All those organs that serve as waste gates to the bodily frame are immediately roused to most vigorous action, and endeavor to throw off the superabundance before it has corrupted the system. For a time the object is in a good measure accomplished. But wearied out ere long by incessant labor, they fail to accomplish their object, and soon disease is able to fix its talons in the constitution. The man brought suddenly upon a sick bed, racks his invention to assign some cause for his complaint, that will exonerate himself from blame; and he feels perfectly satisfied, if he can recollect having taken a cold, or having been necessitated to perform some extra labor. Whereas, had he been temperate, that extra labor would not probably have injured him, nor a slight atmospheric vicissitude have resulted in a catarrh or cold. His intemperance has exhausted the powers of life, and the vitiated blood can no longer be purified by their action: The intelligent physician often sees in the flushed countenance and fleshiness of one man, and in the paleness and emaciation of another, the marks of incipient disease. But the individual himself, borne up by the over excitement of stimulating food, fancies himself secure from disease until suddenly prostrated.

Lest I should seem to be exaggerating the effects of excess in eating in producing disease, I will fortify my statements by the opinion of several distinguished physicians.

*Gluttony and intemperance, says one, are the source of two thirds of the diseases which embitter the life of man.*

*The due degree of temperance, says another, would add one third to the duration of human life.*

*I tell you honestly, says a third, what I think is the cause of the complicated maladies of the human race: it is their gormandizing, and stuffing and stimulating their digestive organs to an excess, thereby producing nervous disorders and irritation.*

*It is the opinion of the majority of the most distinguished physicians, says a fourth, that intemperance in diet, destroys the bulk of mankind: in other words, that what is eaten and drank, and thus taken into the habit, is the original cause of by far the greater number of diseases which afflict the human race.*

*Most of all the chronical diseases, the infirmities of old age, and the short period of the lives of Englishmen, said another, more than a century since, are owing to repletion.*

*Says another, What occasions two thirds of all inflammatory and febrile diseases, but causes, in themselves not serious, operating upon a system highly susceptible of diseased action, from being overcharged with stimulating and nutritious matter? All our most eminent physicians agree in this one point, that as a people, we eat far too much hearty food; that is, we take in more rich nutriment than we require, and the consequence is, our system becomes overloaded and oppressed - our organs are clogged in the performance of their several functions - the circulating fluids become too thick and stimulating, and the proneness to derangement and diseased action, is greatly increased. Hence arises a large proportion of the inflammatory and febrile diseases amongst us, and hence it is, that copious blood letting and active medicines are so much more required in America than in most other countries.*

Will not these appalling testimonies startle those Christians, who, by their excesses are taking the very course which is here marked out, as the road to premature disease and death? Will they still continue to regard the intemperate drinker as the only man who is violating the command, Thou shalt not kill? In view of such results from the daily violation of the rules of temperance in eating, can he go on as he has done, with his conscience asleep? Can he thus cut short his days, and not be guilty? For it ought further to be remembered, that excess in food, not merely predisposes to disease, but weakens the power of the system to resist disease. Hence the temperate man will rise unhurt from an attack which will crush the glutton at once. For the latter has tasked his bodily organs so severely, that they cannot sustain a conflict with disease. This is admitted universally in the case of the drunkard. But it is equally true in respect to that man who is intemperate in food. And if his constitution give way thirty or forty years earlier, in consequence of that intemperance, why is he less guilty than the drunkard, for the self-immolation?

II. I proceed next to consider the effects of intemperance in eating *upon the mental character.*

The bodily torpor, already described as the result of excess, cannot exist without imparting a corresponding stupidity to the mind. In other words, the load that paralyses the bodily powers must prostrate the intellect and cramp all its energies. Let a man attempt vigorously to exercise his mind after a hearty meal, and he will have a good idea of the effects of excess upon the intellect. He cannot confine the attention, nor depend upon the memory, nor rouse the imagination, nor trust the judgment. What though he direct his eye to the pages of science, or even to the lighter pages of literature; a heavy fog impedes his vision, and a leaden weight hangs upon the intellectual wheels and springs. In short, his

mental powers are too obtuse to discern, and too lethargic to act. The only alternative is to let them rest until the corporeal system is relieved of its task. This is in fact the course that is generally taken. And in this way an immense amount of time is lost, and that too without any compunctions of conscience; because men generally do not know that the indisposition to mental exertion which they feel is the result of excessive indulgence of the appetite. Multitudes of literary men at the present day, who suppose themselves as diligent in study and in bodily effort as is consistent with health, are in the habit of losing almost entirely their afternoons, and of giving them up to sleep, or lethargy, or idle sauntering about. After dinner they are really incapable of bodily or mental effort, because they have indulged themselves too freely at the table. Some in such circumstances resort to the stimulus of tea, or coffee, or even wine. But the forced mental operations that succeed are unnatural and inefficient: and in the end no time is gained, because the prostration subsequent to such excitement is great and long continued. Nothing, indeed, but universal temperance can give a uniform and unsophisticated energy to the mind. Every student knows something of the nature of this energy, if he has ever sat down to his books in the morning, after a refreshing night's sleep and a light breakfast. His system is then free from the irritation and oppression of dietetic excesses: and such a state essentially may be continued through the day by the practice of strict temperance; for it is as true of the universally temperate man as of the vegetable feeder - that *with him it is morning all the day long*.

I appeal then to the individual who thus almost habitually loses his afternoons, and inquire of him, what account he expects to render to God for so much time wasted by the unnecessary indulgence of the appetite? Especially do I inquire of the minister of Christ, upon whose time at the present day there is an almost constant demand, how he expects to meet with composure in judgment those whom he has so often warned against the waste of their precious time? *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?*

III. In the third place, let us consider the effects of excess in eating, *upon the moral and religious character*.

Most men suppose that the slight pain, or uneasiness, or drowsiness, that succeeds a too hearty meal, is the whole of the effect which such excess produces. When a man finds himself, some hours or even days after the indulgence, excited in his temper on the slightest provocation, fretful and impatient of contradiction, and betrayed into severity or retaliation unworthy the character of a Christian or a man, little is he aware that a more careful attention to the kind and quantity of his food might have armed him against the temptations that overcame him, and enabled him to have kept his temper even under the grossest insults. But he has only to put in practice the rules of temperance, suggested in a preceding discourse, to be satisfied that one principal cause of a fretful temper, and a disposition easily to be excited and exasperated, and an impatience of contradiction, lies in his intemperate habits at the table. Indeed, he will become satisfied that the essence of his sin lies more in the cause, which is excess in eating, than in its almost unavoidable result, an irritable temper.

Many men are in the habit of living almost continually in a feverish state of feeling, disposed to murmur at almost every occurrence, and very rarely to be in a state calm enough for prayer, or any other religious duty. Now in many instances this ruffled state of mind is kept up by the irritation of the nervous system occasioned by overloading the digestive powers. The temperate man alone can exhibit the temper of a philosopher and the calmness of the Christian. Just in proportion to a man's intemperance in any respect, will be the violence and irregularity of his passions. He may impute their ravages to peculiarity of constitution; but most probably, in nearly every case, God imputes it to some

criminal indulgence. It is high time that Christians had learnt to practice universal temperance before they charge an irritable temper or ferocious passions upon nature.

Another frequent attendant upon excess in eating is gloom and melancholy. The individual finds his spirits sinking without any apparent cause, and gloomy forebodings, preying upon his mind. Hope, that once buoyed him up with elastic wing, now sinks under the heavy load of melancholy, and almost ceases to breathe. A lowering cloud encircles the horizon and gradually spreads over the whole heavens. A settled despondency and listless inaction not unfrequently come on, interrupted only by occasional seasons of abstinence or temperance. Although the man feels as if he could readily part with every earthly possession if he could recover his former cheerfulness, yet he never once suspects that the reduction of a few ounces of food at each meal would effectually remove the incubus from his soul.

*The great majority of those complaints which are considered purely mental, says Dr. James Johnson, Physician extraordinary to the King of England, such as irritability and irascibility of temper, gloomy melancholy, timidity and irresolution, despondency, &c. might be speedily remedied and entirely removed by a rigid system of abstinence, and a very little medicine.*

Fatal as is this gloomy state of mind to success in worldly pursuits, its most lamentable influence is exerted upon the religious character. The individual had long perhaps thought himself created anew in Christ Jesus, and indulged the hope of being an heir to the eternal inheritance. But he loses all confidence and almost all hope of final acceptance: and his thoughts brood with terrible self-application upon all that is terrific to the unconverted sinner and the formal professor. In vain is he pointed to the divine promises, or exhorted to meditate upon the richness and freeness of grace as exhibited through a Savior. But let him for a few weeks give up his rich and stimulating diet, and partake only of the plainest fare, and that in the smallest quantity which will sustain life and health, and he will find the cloud gradually withdrawing, and the Sun of Righteousness rising again with healing in his wings. Even when his abstemiousness is carried so far as to weaken, in some measure, his bodily energies, he will find that his mind will gather strength and be filled again with the peace of God that passeth understanding.

Pomponius Atticus, the friend of Cicero, under the influence of that melancholy which so often accompanies a disordered state of the stomach, had resolved to destroy himself: but being persuaded to accomplish his purpose by starvation, taking only a little water from time to time to alleviate his anguish, the abstinence of a few days cured his melancholy, and he readily abandoned his purpose of suicide, and actually lived to an advanced age. By abstinence or temperance may religious melancholy also, in a great many instances, be cured. Indeed I have little doubt that a majority of the cases of feeble hope and desponding faith that exist at the present day, in those manifestly pious, are produced by excess in eating. The daily habit of taking into the system even a few ounces more of food than the organs can well manage, is sufficient to keep the spirits continually depressed; and to convert a once vigorous, active, cheerful Christian, into a desponding, irresolute, inefficient slave. Could such men be persuaded to try the effect of uniform and strict temperance, they would find such a relief as would guard them effectually against future indulgence. But they are usually the very last persons to be persuaded that they are intemperate, or that such simple means will work so powerful a cure.

Excess operates injuriously upon the religious character in another way. It produces an irregularity in all the feelings and affections good and bad: now raising them to a high pitch of excitement, and then occasioning them to sink so low that no call can arouse them. Now how can a man judge correctly respecting his Christian character, while under the influence of such irregular emotions? He soon finds that his religious feelings are in a great measure dependent upon the state of his bodily health; and when they seem to be such as Christian experience requires, how can he tell whether they are the result

of religious principle or of disordered nerves? And when nothing will excite them, may not the cause be an exhausted state of the system from excess in food?

O, what Christian, who knows anything of the value of a bright and steady hope of heaven, and of uniform and consistent religious feelings, will consent to give up these blessings for the sake of unnecessary indulgence of morbid appetite! Can he be a Christian who will do it? He cannot certainly be an eminent Christian. Indeed, we may set it down as a universal fact, that no great eater can be a very consistent, or amiable, or happy man. He is under the dominion of one of the grossest of the animal appetites; and until he can learn to mortify this and deny himself unnecessary and forbidden gratification, he must be content to live destitute of the pure and holy joys which are the reward of temperance and devoted piety.

Individuals who suffer from religious melancholy usually expect and receive much sympathy from their Christian brethren and from Christian ministers, on the ground that it is their misfortune rather than their sin. But before we tender them our sympathies, we ought to inquire into their dietetic habits - we ought to dine with them once, and see whether the cause of their despondency does not lie in unreasonable indulgence. If so, strict temperance may cure them: and if they will not adopt this remedy, they ought rather to be reproved, and warned of their guilt and danger, than pitied for their calamity.

IV. In the fourth place let us glance at the effects of excess in eating *upon the domestic character*.

Religion, predominating in the family circle, is generally and justly regarded as rendering that the happiest spot on earth. But just in proportion as intemperance of any kind prevails there, will that happiness be neutralized. Children, fed upon rich and stimulating food, will become sickly and peevish; and instead of exhibiting those innocent and playful feelings that render them such interesting objects in a family scene, they will convert it into a Bedlam. Parents and domestics will have enough to do to manage their unruly tempers and to nurse their sickly constitutions. Especially will this be the case, if those parents have indulged themselves as well as their children in luxurious living: for then their own tempers will be irritable, their feelings irregular, and their patience easily exhausted. To-day, they will break forth upon their disobedient offspring with violent and needless severity. Tomorrow, through mere irresolution, they will suffer their authority to be trampled upon. That same irresolution and the despondency that often accompanies it, will render them unfaithful in giving religious instruction to their children, and dispose them to be so reserved and cold in their intercourse with their little ones, as will send a chill and alienation through their hearts. The same cause will prevent between husbands and wives that cheerful and constant attention to one another's wants, and that sociable disposition so essential to mutual happiness; and a cold, unlovely manner will most probably be substituted, which will prove a poison to domestic enjoyment. No family circle can be truly happy where cheerfulness and a mutual disposition to please and be pleased do not exist. But there is not a greater enemy to such a state of feeling than excess in food. So that he who daily loads the table of his family with every dainty for the palate - even when real love to his family is the motive - may be sure that he is throwing an apple of discord and petulance into fallen man's only remaining paradise. Would he preserve the happiness of that Paradise, let him by precept and example, strive to make it the abode of universal temperance.

V. In the fifth place, let us consider the effects of excess in eating, upon *the social character*.

We have only to suppose a community generally devoted to the indulgence of the palate, and then inquire, how the physical, intellectual and moral effects of the excesses that have been pointed out in the case of an individual, affect the social condition. The individuals of such a community will be subject to the physical and mental torpor and imbecility which are the inevitable concomitants of over-eating. Such then will be the predominant character of the community. Feeble health and the want of power to sustain hardship and fatigue, will result in an effeminacy which always marks a sinking state of society. Few, if any, bright examples of active and powerful intellect will be seen, where intellect is cramped by an overloaded corporeal system. Wherever excitement exists it will be violent and irregular; because the sensibilities of every luxurious man are rendered morbid; and because, too, his passions and feelings are subject to sudden and great alternations. Are the individuals in society feverish and fretful in their tempers? How can frequent and painful collisions and alienations be avoided, when they come in contact? Are they melancholy and jealous, as great eaters frequently are? Then will deep-rooted enmity and hatred spring up in their bosoms against their neighbors, and society will be convulsed by their discord.

Late hours are an almost inevitable attendant upon dietetic excesses. - A too hearty dinner produces an almost unconquerable tendency to sleep; and an afternoon nap is followed by wakefulness during the first part of the night. This is usually increased by the stimulus of tea, coffee, wine, or spirits. These, by creating an artificial appetite, are almost sure to be an occasion of hearty and late suppers. The final consequence will be, that the individual who takes such a course of living will sleep in the morning rather than at night. Of course, breakfast will be late, and therefore dinner must be so too. In this way is the whole system of late hours introduced, particularly among the wealthy, who suffer most from luxurious living. And it having become fashionable to be late, the contagion will be more or less communicated to other classes, until the whole community is infected. Now I hesitate not to say, that, almost without an exception, the man whose habits are such as above described, cannot be a very industrious man; for he loses in sleep the hours of the morning; one of which is more valuable, for physical or intellectual labor, than two at any other time of the day. Most injurious, therefore, upon the industry of society, will be the effect of excess in eating. And if individuals are found, who are really industrious, notwithstanding their hearty dinners and late hours, yet they do a violence to their constitutions which will be followed by premature prostration and decay.

While the industrious habits of society are thus more or less paralyzed, the same cause excites to extravagant expenditures. As the appetite becomes more fastidious and epicurean, the richness and variety of entertainments must be increased. Envy, pride, and unholy emulation, lend their influence in stimulating families to attempt excelling one another in the richness and variety of their entertainments. Nor is it in food and drink only that there is a strife for the mastery. For excess in diet infallibly leads to extravagance in dress, furniture, and equipage. Even the poor emulate the rich in these costly exhibitions, if admitted to their society; or if not, excessive extravagance among the wealthy, stimulates other classes to like extravagance, so far as is in their power. And thus it happens, that multitudes, who live far beyond their income, fancy themselves very economical and temperate, because their table is less luxuriously loaded, and their equipage less splendid than that of some rich neighbor; when in fact, their extravagance may be far greater, and more criminal than their neighbor's, because he is guilty of spending only the surplus of his income, while they are reducing themselves to poverty.

In no country in the world is it so easy for all classes of society to obtain the means of living independently and comfortably as in this. - Yet what complaining of the hardness of the times, and the stagnation of business do we hear on every side; and what a large proportion of our citizens are so encumbered by debt as to be perpetually tormented while alive, and to leave their property insolvent! Whence is this but from the excesses and extravagancies that have been mentioned? They spend vastly

more for food and drink, and for equaling their neighbors in dress and equipage, than necessity or happiness demands. And yet, intelligent as our citizens are; nay, Christians, as many of them are, they scarcely suspect that they exceed at all the bounds of temperance or of economy, and really suppose that their pecuniary embarrassments result from no fault of theirs. But the truth is, the chief source of bankruptcy among the rich, and of straitened circumstances among the poorer classes of the community, lies in some species of intemperance or extravagance in living. And it always will be so, until men shall learn, better than they now understand, in what intemperance and extravagance consist.

A necessary result of luxurious living, is a contemptible effeminacy of character in one sex, and a pitiable nervous frailty in the other. Hence, communities given for a long time to excess and extravagance, swarm with so many young men, who exhibit all the softness of the female character, without any of its virtues; whose days are devoted to trifling decorations and accomplishments; whose sensibilities are exhausted upon trifles, and whose physical and intellectual features are personified imbecility. Hence too, in the same communities, are found so many females, who, in the language of scripture, *would not adventure to set the sole of their foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness*. Their physical constitutions are deeply impressed with the marks of frailty, imperfect development, and disproportionate culture: and how can their minds but resemble the fragile and weak tenement in which they are imprisoned? A sensibility, painfully acute, is their most striking characteristic; unfitting them for the trying duties that devolve upon wives and mothers; and indeed, they are little better calculated for usefulness than the porcelain ornaments of the rich man's parlor.

Now, with such effeminacy in the fathers, and ridiculous weakness in the mothers, what will be the character of their progeny? In a few generations how deteriorated and contemptible! Indeed, it requires but two or three generations absolutely to run out a family that gives itself up to luxurious indulgence. Born destitute of stamina, in the physical constitution, and alike puny in intellect, and pampered in the cradle of luxury, the descendants have not the power to retain even the pecuniary consequence, much less the character of their progenitors; and often the very name ceases among men. Some temperate and industrious individual, from an obscure condition, gradually comes into possession of their wealth, and in turn his descendants give up the reins to self-indulgence, and take the same downward course, and are soon buried in the same oblivious gulf.

*Oh Luxury! the eldest born of wealth,  
Thou foe to virtue, and thou bane of health;  
Insidious nursling in the lap of ease,  
Whose breath is pestilence, whose smile disease,  
May suffering man yet see thee as thou art,  
A greedy vampire, feasting on his heart!*

[Source: Poem by Solyman Brown, 1833]

VI. In the sixth place, let us consider the effects of epicurean indulgence *upon the national character*.

Physical energy - so greatly is mind dependant upon matter - lies at the foundation of a nation's success and glory. But epicurean excesses impair, and finally crush it. How little of clear-sighted, effective legislation, and of promptness and decision in time of peril, and of evenhanded justice following close upon the heels of crime, can we expect, when rulers and magistrates are frequently found at the table of luxury oppressing and benumbing all their intellectual and moral energies! Nor can a nation expect that her sailors and soldiers will escape the withering influence, when the example of indulgence is set

by legislators, judges, and the respectable portion of the citizens. More than one Hannibal, who had conquered the snows of the Alps, and the sword of his enemy, has been subdued by the luxuries of Capua.

Nor let a nation imagine that a resolute and pervading spirit of enterprise can long coexist with luxurious indulgence. The men who line their country's coasts with forests of masts, who build up at frequent intervals the busy and the mighty city, and who, in their commercial enterprises, traverse every ocean and clime, now braving the billows and the icebergs of arctic and antarctic seas, and now the heats and pestilence of the torrid zone, are never trained for their work at the table of luxury. And just in proportion as dietetic excesses prevail, will such hardy enterprises diminish. So in every other art and pursuit demanding vigor and noble daring, the arm of industry will be palsied, and those arts only flourish that minister to effeminacy and luxury.

Well were it for a nation if the deteriorating process stopped here. But that apple of a nation's eye, its morality, soon feels its inroads; and its quick-sighted consciousness of pollution becomes dimmed. The obtuseness which excess produces in the individual brain, is communicated by an infallible sympathy to the national conscience and heart. The abandoned and the profligate fear not to outrage more and more the moral sense of the community, because they see that the eagle eye and inflexible lion heart of virtue have departed. And yet, so gradual and smooth is this downward progress, that rarely is warning given or taken, till the giddy whirlpool is too far entered to return.

But this brightest jewel in a nation's crown cannot thus be plucked out without other glories falling into the plunderer's hand. Republican simplicity of manners, and republican equality of condition, are soon forced to flee from so uncongenial a soil; while customs and habits most unnatural and disgusting to the pure taste of temperance, come in like a flood; sweeping away every resting place of freedom, and raising up a haughty aristocracy to lord it over a prostrate multitude, made too imbecile, physically, intellectually, and morally, by aping the luxury and extravagance of their oppressors, to be able to resist them.

It is indeed true, that intemperance in diet is never the sole cause of this dreadful prostration of a nation's glories. Other marauders are always in company with this, to make sure the destruction and to share the spoil. But this is one of the leaders and pioneers in the accursed work; and if successfully resisted, none of the ruthless banditti that follow in the train, will be able to maintain their ground.

VII. Finally, let us consider the effects of dietetic excesses upon *the cause of benevolence*.

In such an artificial state of society as exists in most civilized nations, when luxury and extravagance have imparted to the animal appetites a most unnatural and ravenous strength, very few persons, not even professed Christians, are aware how few and simple are the real wants of nature. They have no idea with how cheap a fare she can, not only be satisfied, but made abundantly happy. Hence many good men have come to regard even a very criminal excess and extravagance in living as necessary to the health, strength, and well-being of the human system. Hence too, they can form no just estimate of the great amount of pecuniary saving which the really temperate man is able to make. To state that most families might easily in this way reduce the expenses of living by a third, or half, would seem most unreasonably extravagant; yet I doubt not but even this is a calculation that will be found far below the actual experiment in millennial times. For it is not merely the saving in the article of food that is to be taken into the account. Good as well as bad habits always cluster together: and when men become really temperate, they are led naturally and easily to cast off their needless extravagancies of dress,



furniture and equipage. Thus will a man ere long extricate himself from many vortexes of expenditure quite as large, deep and rapid, as that which revolves and roars around the table of luxury. Nor is this all. For, strict temperance in diet will give the physical ability and the mental inclination for a more untiring, active and efficient industry, whereby the pecuniary means will be greatly enlarged. A man who will faithfully adopt such retrenchments, and practice such industry, will be astonished and delighted to find how God will bless him in his basket and his store; and how wonderfully he can swell his contributions to the cause of benevolence. His hundreds now will cost him less of effort and sacrifice - I had almost said than his stinted tens before. Oh that Christians would learn to taste the joy of acting upon this millennial standard!

Pecuniary contribution, however, is not the greatest and most important offering which we are required to make to the cause of benevolence. There is the consecration of one's self, body, soul, and spirit, a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. We are to hold ourselves ready to go wherever he shall call us, and to do and suffer whatever he shall lay upon us, for promoting the temporal and eternal happiness of our fellow men. But how can he whose pampered appetite loathes the simple fare of temperance, and who is wedded in his attachment to rich and stimulating food, how can he accompany the devoted Moravian amid the eternal snows of the frigid zone, or be content to follow the Arab over the burning sands of the desert? No, these are services which he will leave for the disciples of temperance to perform; and persuade himself that his constitution is too delicate, and his prospect of usefulness too bright in civilized society, to permit him to leave the land of his father's: whereas, it may be, that his luxurious habits alone have crippled his physical energies, and rendered stagnant the current of benevolence that should flow, warm and rapid, through every Christian's bosom; and therefore, God will not accept his apology for holding back from the missionary work.

Christian brother, or sister, whose eye may fall on these pages, are you to be reckoned in respect to your dietetic habits, among the temperate or the intemperate? Are you daily giving up the reins to appetite, so as to bring oppression upon your bodily powers, stupor upon your intellect, and apathy upon your heart? Are you thus, for the sake of pampering and gratifying mere animal nature, planting in your body the seeds of disease, and shortening your earthly career, too short at best? Are you thus polluting and destroying that body which is consecrated by your profession to be a temple of the Holy Ghost? And especially, can you thus treat the immortal spirit that animates this body: cramping and clouding the range of its exercises - rendering your disposition irritable and unlovely - fostering gloomy and corroding passions, and spreading doubt and despondency over your prospects for eternity? Oh, this is a dreadful tax for a Christian to pay to a tyrant so vile as intemperance!

Christian parents! are you bringing up your families on the principles of the strictest temperance, or are you suffering your children to make a god of their belly, and by rich and stimulating food to render their bodies sickly, their minds feeble, and their tempers crabbed? Oh, save them from the grasp of the remorseless tyrant, dyspepsy, and the community from the curse of a puny and useless progeny, and yourselves from bitter disappointment and anguish!

Christian citizen and fellow countryman, what is the testimony in respect to temperance in living which your table presents? Does the simplicity of patriarchal times and of our pilgrim fathers adorn it, or does modern extravagance load it down? Nobly take your stand, I beseech you, against the flood of luxury and excess that is rapidly spreading over us and paralysing the energies of our social and national character, consuming, worse than uselessly, our wealth, sowing in the community the poisonous seeds of envy and jealousy - prostrating the spirit of enterprise - lowering rapidly the standard of morality - and fostering that effeminacy and weakness of character, which invite the restless and ambitious to assail and destroy our liberties.

Christian philanthropist! lover of mankind! do you prefer the luxuries of the table to the luxury of doing good? Shall sordid appetite or slavery to general custom, be permitted to dry up the sources and stint the means of beneficence? Oh, at this day, when the cry for help, from so many lands waxes louder and louder, almost with a deafening emphasis, and when so many new fields for benevolent enterprise are showing their drought and desolation, every remaining clasp of selfishness should be unlocked from the Christian's heart; and through every avenue which industry, economy and self-denial can make, should the warm current of benevolence gush forth, full, and clear, and strong, for the conversion of the world.

(The subject to be continued.)

## Sermon 506 Blessings of Temperance in Food

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### BLESSINGS OF TEMPERANCE IN FOOD

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### BLESSINGS OF TEMPERANCE IN FOOD

*Daniel 1.: 12-15.—Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.*

Daniel was prompted by conscientious scruples in making this request. He knew, perhaps, that the *portion of the king's meat and wine* which was sent them, had been previously offered in sacrifice to some idol god, and feared lest he should seem to connive at such idolatry. He had, moreover, doubtless observed, that such rich living, as must have been common in that luxurious court, operated unfavorably both upon body and mind. The result of ten days trial of a simple yet nourishing vegetable diet, *making their countenances fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat of the king's meat*, has been regarded by some commentators as miraculous: and so it seems to have been considered by the Babylonian eunuchs, who had the charge of Daniel and his companions. Indeed, the general opinion among the great mass of mankind, in almost every age, has been, that a diet of simple bread and other

vegetable food, with nothing but water for drink, is not only most unfriendly to comfort and happiness, but inconsistent with vigorous health and fullness of muscle and strength. But the man who has perseveringly tried such a diet, after using one of a more stimulating character, sees in its effects upon these Jewish youth, nothing but the natural consequence of a return to the proper course of living. The more luxurious course urged upon them by the king, must have had a peculiarly unfavorable effect upon the health of these virtuous Jews, who had probably all their former days practised temperance; and very likely they had now become somewhat emaciated. A return to their former healthy diet, even for ten days, might therefore have perceptibly added to their muscular fullness, and especially to the fairness of their complexion. We need not, therefore, call in the aid of a special miracle to explain the result: or rather, it is one of those cases, (fortunately not uncommon at this day,) in which God commissions temperance to perform the work of a miracle, without any suspension or contravention of laws of nature.

Such a case as this, therefore, may serve as a convenient starting point in describing the salutary effects of temperance in the use of food. And this is the use I shall make of it in the present discourse.

I shall take it for granted that he who adopts a strictly temperate course in respect to food, is equally temperate in respect to drink; and that he abjures every alcoholic and stimulating mixture; using for his daily beverage, that pure and only fluid, which God has created and widely diffused for the drink of man and other animals. Let the community but adopt such a system of temperance, and the following blessings will be the result:

### *1. Health and Longevity*

I would guard against conveying the opinion, as some writers on this subject seem to have done, that even the strictest temperance in diet will infallibly secure to a man the blessings of health and longevity. For there are other causes of disease and premature decay, besides dietetic excesses; and to some of them we are all inevitably exposed; and we often expose ourselves to those that are not inevitable. There is exposure to vicissitudes of climate and weather; to the damps and chills of the night; to the prostrating heats of a vertical sun; to the unhealthy miasms of decaying vegetable and animal matter; to deleterious chemical agents in the processes of the arts; to the reaction of the soul on the body when the labors of the intellect have been too severe, or the nobler powers have been overdone with care; and above all, to the deadly influence of unrestrained consuming passions. He who has escaped all these influences, has been favored almost miraculously. But none do escape; and often they plant the seeds of disease in the constitution, too deeply for the strictest diet and regimen to eradicate. Yet temperance in diet, joined with appropriate exercise, and regularity in other habits, will, if anything can do it, bring back to the invalid health and happiness. It will also fortify the system more vigorously to resist all morbid influences; and thus it becomes a chief auxiliary to health and longevity.

That these blessings must naturally result from temperance in all things, the laws of physiology would lead us to expect. God has constructed the machinery of the human system so perfectly, and adapted its moving powers with such admirable skill, that health and longevity are natural to it, and disease and premature decay unnatural. Nay, he has given to it an internal elasticity, by which it is able to resist, without permanent injury, the ordinary vicissitudes and morbid influences to which it is exposed. The moment an injurious agent comes in contact with the system, or is introduced into it, a multitude of springs and pumps and chemical affinities are at work to resist and expel the poison. And it is only when the morbid action is severe, or long continued, that a permanent injury results, and the delicate

machinery becomes deranged, and the vital energy impaired. True, there is sometimes a malformation in the system - an original imperfect and deficient construction of parts - which infallibly entails disease and early death. But if once carried through the period of infancy, we may generally calculate, that with proper attention and care, the human constitution may last through the ordinary term of human existence. Not a few constitutions may easily be made to continue in play far beyond that period; and to number even a century of happy years. The reason why the period beyond three score and ten is usually labor and sorrow, is, that some kind of unnecessary exposure or excess, either in food, drink, or physical or intellectual effort, have overtasked the organs of the body, and exhausted the vital energies, and introduced disease. Now the system of temperance for which I plead, imposes upon the organs of digestion only that amount of labor which is necessary to give to the system, bodily and mental, the most perfect health and energy. It does not allow of overloading the digestive or assimilating organs in the least, for the sake of gratifying the palate. Consequently these organs are never oppressed, and disease is never the consequence of what is taken in the form of food and drink: because God has so constructed the human machine, that it can perform labor to this amount, without the slightest inconvenience. Unless, therefore, some extraordinary morbid influence intervenes, such a man's constitution will run on in perfect health, till that period of extreme old age, when, according to divine appointment, *this earthly house of our tabernacle must be dissolved* by the operation of natural laws - the same as those which limit the duration of other animals, and of trees, and the smaller vegetables. For a man to be assailed, while in health and vigor, with fierce disease, and laid in the grave, is as really unnatural as for the tree to be cut down in its greenness and freshness by the axe of the husbandman. The operation of the ordinary laws of nature is in both cases equally interrupted by the intervention of a foreign and violent agency. And inasmuch as morbid influences are much more powerful when introduced among the delicate organs of the animal system, than when acting externally, we see the reason why intemperance in diet is so much more fatal to health and longevity than any other cause.

What the laws of physiology would thus lead us to expect, as the effect of temperance upon health and longevity, experience abundantly confirms. For there have been a few in all ages, whose practice has corresponded essentially with the principles of temperance which I have advocated in previous discourses. (Nos. 10 and 12, Vol. viii.) Many of the ancient philosophers, especially the Pythagoreans, restricted themselves to a vegetable diet, with water alone for drink, and experienced the health, longevity, and vigor of intellect, which such temperance naturally brings along with it. The early Christians too, particularly those driven by persecution into banishment, by the practice of similar abstemiousness, were rewarded by similar blessings. Many a modern biography, also, of the great and the good, affords a demonstrative example of the truth of my position. But the case of one who, living and dying, bore a most beautiful testimony on this subject, is all that can be here exhibited. *I am now ninety-five years of age, says he, and find myself as healthy and brisk, as if I were but twenty-five. Most of your old men have scarce arrived at sixty, but they find themselves loaded with infirmities: they are melancholy, unhealthy, always full of frightful apprehensions of dying: Blessed be God, I am free from their ills and terrors - I hold that dying, in the manner I expect, is not really death, but a passage of the soul from this earthly life to a celestial, immortal and infinitely perfect existence - It cannot be too frequently or too earnestly recommended, that as the natural heat decays by age, a man ought to abate the quantity of what he eats and drinks; nature requiring but very little for the healthy support of the life of man, especially of an old man. Would my aged friends but attend to this single precept, which has been so singularly serviceable to me, they would not be troubled with one twentieth of those infirmities, which now harass and make their lives so miserable. They would be light, active and cheerful, like me, who am now near my hundredth year. From these two evils (sickness and death) so dreadful to many, blessed be God, I have but little to fear. For, as for death, I have a joyful hope, that the change, come when it may, will be gloriously for the better. And as for sickness, I feel but little apprehension on that*

*account, since by my divine medicine, Temperance, I have removed all causes of disease; so that I am pretty sure I shall never be sick, except it be from some intent of divine mercy, and then I hope I shall bear it without a murmur, and find it for my good. All who have a mind to live long and healthy, and die without sickness of body or mind, must immediately begin to live temperately; for such a regularity keeps the humors of the body mild and sweet, and suffers no gross fiery vapors to ascend from the stomach to the head. And when, in process of time, and after a long series of years, he sees the period of his days drawing nigh, he is neither grieved nor alarmed - his end is calm, and he expires like a lamp, when the oil is spent, without convulsion or agony, and so passes gently away, without pain or sickness, from this earthly and corruptible, to that celestial and eternal life, whose happiness is the reward of the virtuous (Life of Cornaro, p. 29).*

### *2. Temperance softens down the fierceness and turbulence of the animal appetites and passions.*

It is over-stimulation that renders these appetites and passions ungovernable. But temperance furnishes them only with the stimulus that is necessary to enable them to fulfil the offices for which their Creator intended them. Temptation, therefore, in a great measure loses its power over the temperate man: while the self-denial which he exercises over one propensity to excess, strengthens his hands for holding in the reins of every other. On the other hand, he who is guilty of dietetic excesses, throws a firebrand into the midst of all that is combustible in the human constitution, and goads onward everything in it that is excitable. By yielding up the reins to one appetite, he loosens also his hold upon every other. We may expect, therefore, as the result, a wild and irregular action among the animal powers, and fierce outbursts of passion and appetite.

All this accords fully with experience. Is it the fruit of temperance that fills our weekly, and even daily public journals, with the details of intrigues, adulteries, thefts, personal contests, robbery and murder? The records of our courts of justice and of our prisons, testify unequivocally to the inseparable connection between intemperance and crime. And the records of social life, the records of every observing man's experience, give equally clear testimony to the amiable temper and conduct of those who are temperate in all things: who not only abstain from every intoxicating mixture, but have a proper regard to the quantity and quality of their necessary food. Not only are they free from the grosser vices, but they stand aloof also from the thousand petty contests, jealousies, and heartburnings, that so frequently convert society into an arena of battle, and fill it with hatred and suffering.

The private history of temperate man, also, testifies to his inward serenity and peace. Passions and appetites, like other men, he indeed possesses, which require to be watched over with vigilance and restrained with energy. But they have not acquired, through excess, giant strength and ferocity. The winds of passion and the currents of appetite are strong enough to keep the vessel in pleasant motion, but not strong enough to throw the waves into mountains, nor to form the devouring whirlpool.

### *3. Temperance promotes clearness and vigor of intellect.*

This position, like those that have preceded, requires only an appeal to the laws of physiology and the experience of mankind to demonstrate it. If the functions of the brain be not in a healthy and vigorous state, equally unhealthy and inefficient must be those of the mind. Now there is no organ of the body so easily affected by irregularity and difficulty of digestion and assimilation as the brain. Excess in food, therefore, operates directly to cloud and impede the movements of the intellect. This is so well

understood by literary men generally, that they never attempt any difficult investigations, nor powerful mental efforts, soon after a hearty meal. Few, however, are aware, that even slight excesses at the table, produce a permanent depression and stupor of mind. But where such excess is habitual, the elasticity of the mental powers is never sufficient wholly to free them from the incubus that bestrides them. Like the overloaded bodily organs, the mind is gradually more and more weakened, until great efforts are out of the question, and the whole physical and intellectual constitution sinks into premature imbecility. But rarely is a man aware of the difficulty under which he labors, until he ceases to overload his stomach: - then he finds such a buoyancy, clearness, and vigor of mind to be the result, as to astonish and delight, while at the same time it mortifies him, to find how long his nobler part has been made slave of his animal nature.

Most strikingly coincident with these views, has been the history of intellectual greatness in every age. Indeed, that history will bear me out in asserting, that the highest and most successful intellectual efforts have ever been associated with the practice of those general principles of temperance in diet for which I plead. I am aware that there is a kind of literature, and very popular too, that is often successfully pursued by the man whose powers are subject to the morbid excitement and horrid depression which intemperance produces: I refer to works of imagination; to poetry and romance. But success in these departments depends more upon strong excitability, and a lively imagination, than upon strength of mind, or patient thought. Hence productions of this description are neither to be regarded as holding a very high rank as intellectual efforts, nor as the most successful or useful. It is the mighty minds that have grappled most successfully with the demonstrations of mathematical, intellectual, and moral science, that stand highest on the scale of mental acumen and power: and it is such minds that have found strict temperance in diet essential to their success. I cannot refrain from adverting to the history of a few of these master spirits of the human race.

The philosophers of ancient times have been already noticed, as illustrious examples of temperance. The names of Hippocrates and Galen among ancient physicians, of Demosthenes and Cicero among the orators, and of Pythagoras, Plato, and Socrates among the philosophers - men whose temperance not only lengthened out their days, in most instances, long beyond the term of three score years and ten, but enabled them also to impress upon all coming times their characters as prodigies of intellect - must ever be regarded as standing at the head of the temperance phalanx of Greece and Rome. In modern times, also, the princes of the intellectual world have almost all belonged to the same sacred band.

Foremost on the list stands Sir Isaac Newton. The treatise of his, that cost him the mightiest intellectual effort of all his works, was composed while the body was sustained by bread and water alone. And in spite of the wear and tear of such protracted and prodigious mental labor as his, that same temperance sustained him to his eighty-fifth year.

Upon no one perhaps has the mantle of Newton fallen so fully, at least so far as learning is concerned, as La Place. And we have the testimony of biography that he *had always been accustomed to a very light diet; that he gradually reduced it to an extremely small quantity*; (Amer. Journal of Science, Vol. 25, p. 11.); *and that he was enabled to continue his habits of excessive application to study until within two years of his death, without any inconvenience, owing to his always using very light diet, even to abstemiousness*. (Journal of Health, Vol. 3, p. 204). He lived seventy-eight years.

Another distinguished mathematician was Euler. And he too, by strict temperance, not only lengthened his days to seventy-six years, but accomplished a large amount of most profound intellectual labor (Idem, p. 203).

The illustrious Boyle must ever be regarded as one of the fathers of modern science, particularly of chemistry. With a very feeble constitution he prolonged his days to sixty-five years; and it is testified that, *the simplicity of his diet preserved his life long beyond men's expectations: and in this he was so regular that in the course of above thirty years, he neither ate nor drank to gratify the varieties of appetite, but merely to support nature* (Aikin's General Biography).

The writings of Chancellor Bacon bear ample testimony to his belief and vindication of the great principles of temperance in living; although, as it happened in respect to his moral and religious character, his practical exemplification of those principles was not always what could be desired. Still he was sufficiently strict in their observance to derive from them great benefit in the prosecution of his intellectual labors.

The celebrated John Locke, with a feeble constitution, outlived the term of three score years and ten by his temperance. *To this temperate mode of life too, he was probably indebted for the increase of those intellectual powers, which gave birth to his incomparable work on the human understanding, his treatises on government and education, as well as his other writings, which do so much honor to his memory* (Journal of Health, Vol. 8, p. 202).

Another intellectual philosopher, who saw four score years, was the venerable Kant. *By this commendable and healthy practice, (early rising,) says his biographer, daily exercise on foot, temperance in eating and drinking, constant employment and cheerful company, he protracted his life to this advanced period;* (Aikin's Biography) and we may add acquired the power for his immense labors of mind.

Whatever be thought of his hypotheses and of his religious character, none can deny the possession of a mighty intellect and profound learning to Leibnitz. And when his biographer informs us that, *he was temperate in eating and drinking, and lived on plain food*, we are let into one of the secrets of his success, and of his longevity.

A like gigantic grasp of intellect, and a brighter picture of moral loveliness, was exhibited by Dr. Thomas Reid: and his biographer testifies, that it was his *temperance and exercise* that kept those powers in play for eighty and six years (Same work).

The operations of Pascal's mind seem to have been too powerful for a material organization like the human body long to sustain. And it was undoubtedly owing to a temperance and abstemiousness so rigid that many would call them ascetic and needless severity, that his frail body endured so long (Piety Exemplified, etc. p. 351).

Few men have more fully established their claims to intellectual superiority of a very high grade, than President Edwards. But it was temperance alone that could carry him through such powerful mental efforts. *Though constitutionally tender, by the rules of temperance, he enjoyed good health, and was enabled to pursue his studies thirteen hours a day.* (Same work, p. 591) *By a sparingness in diet, says he, in his diary, and eating (as much as may be) what is light and easy of digestion, I shall doubtless be able to think clearer, and shall gain time, first by lengthening out my life: secondly, shall need less time for digestion after meals: thirdly, shall be able to study closer, without wrong to my health: fourthly, shall need less time to sleep: fifthly, shall seldomer be troubled with the headache.*



In like manner, by temperance, and fasting (sometimes not less than thirty-six hours,) did the powerful mind of John Calvin continue its operations in spite of a frail bodily organization, long enough to impress his character and name upon the theology of subsequent ages (Same work, p. 174).

The same means enabled Martin Luther, though his days were stormy in the extreme, to make the moral world bend at his will, and to leave for posterity so many profound literary productions. *It often happened*, says his biographer, *that for several days and nights he locked himself up in his study and took no other nourishment than bread and water, that he might the more uninterruptedly pursue his labors.*

The records of English jurisprudence contain scarcely a name more distinguished than that of Sir Matthew Hale. And it is the testimony of history, that *his decided piety and rigid temperance laid him open to the attacks of ridicule; but he could not be moved. In eating and drinking, he observed not only great plainness and moderation, but lived so philosophically, that he always ended his meal with an appetite; so that he lost little time at it: and was disposed to any exercise of the mind, to which he thought fit to apply himself, immediately after he had dined* (Same work, p. 517).

Perhaps no man accomplishes more for the world than he who writes such a commentary on the Scriptures as that of Matthew Henry. And it is, indeed, an immense literary labor. But the biographer's account of that writer's habits shows that temperance and diligence were the secret of his success. *He was an early riser; for he would be in his study by four or five o'clock, and continue there till eight; then, after attending family prayer, and receiving a slight refreshment, he went up again till noon: after dinner he resumed his book or pen till four o'clock, and in the evening visited his friends.* (Piety Exemplified, p. 498)

Another laborious and able commentator and scholar was Dr. Macknight. And his biographer testifies that *his uninterrupted enjoyment of health he owed, under Providence, to a naturally robust make, and a constitution of body uncommonly sound and vigorous; along with regular habits of temperance and of taking exercise, which he did by walking nearly three hours every day* (Macknight's Commentary on the Epistles, p. 7).

The great diligence of Dr. Doddridge, as well as the great amount of his literary labors, although he had to husband a delicate constitution, are too well known to require detail. And his regularity and temperance in living corresponded to such a constitution and to such labors.

Few men have accomplished more than John Wesley. And it is gratifying to learn that it was *extraordinary temperance* which gave him the power to do so much and to live so long (Piety Exemplified, p. 680).

Who is not amazed that Richard Baxter, with a body apparently tottering continually over the grave, and living in the midst of fierce commotions in church and state, could have written so much and so well! But we ought not, perhaps, to wonder, when we are told by his biographer that *his personal abstinence, severities and labors were exceeding great. He kept his body under, and always feared pampering his flesh too much* (Orme's Life of Baxter, Vol. 1, p. 359).

In reading the works of Milton, we are not so much delighted with the play of imagination, as with the rich and profound, though sometimes exceedingly anomalous views, which he opens before us. The fact is, he was a man of powers and attainments so great as justly to be classed among the leading intellects

of his generation. Nor were such powers and attainments disjoined from temperance. It is testified of him, that while engaged in the instruction of youth, *he set the example of hard study and spare diet to his pupils, whom he seems to have disciplined with the severity of old times.* (Aikin's General Biography).

Among the scientific men of modern days, who have risen high and accomplished much, is our countryman Count Rumford. And among his most prominent traits of character were temperance and a love of order. *His wants, his pleasures, and his labors, says Baron Cuvier, were calculated like his experiments. He drank nothing but water - he permitted in himself nothing superfluous.*

Whatever may be thought of his phrenological speculations, no one can doubt but it required powers of the first order and efforts of the most vigorous kind, to establish in so many countries, in spite of prejudice and ridicule, a system so much at variance with received opinions as that of Dr. Spurzheim, and to write so much and so ably in its defence. Nor could he have done it, had not his *temperance and abstemiousness, in the language of his biographer, been very remarkable. We have seen him sitting down to sumptuous meals provided in honor of him, and have seen him fasting for the want of food adapted to his simple taste. At evening, a tumbler of milk and a cracker, or a piece of the simplest cake, satisfied the demands of his athletic and commanding frame, and left his fine intellect without a cloud* (Amer. Journal of Science, Vol. 23, p. 369).

Europe as well as America has been filled with the fame of Franklin: and no less wide spread is the history of his temperance. Early in life he adopted a vegetable diet; and thus he not only gained time for study, but *I made the greater progress, says he, from that greater clearness of head and quickness of apprehension which generally attend temperance in eating and drinking* (Library of Ent. Knowledge, Vol. 3, p. 224). *And though he afterwards relaxed in the austerity of his diet, the habit of being contented with a little, and disregarding the gratifications of the palate remained with him through life, and was highly useful on various occasions* (Aikin's General Biography).

I must not omit the shining example of John Howard. Says Dr. Aikin, *The bare recital of what Mr. Howard did in the cause of humanity, is sufficient to place him among the greatest benefactors of mankind, as well as the most extraordinary private characters recorded in biography. Accustomed to the most rigorous temperance, so as to discard from his diet animal food and fermented liquors, he found no difficulty in living in the poorest countries. In all other respects his mind was equally master of his body, and he incurred hardships of every kind without repugnance. Economical in private expenses, he knew no bounds in his expenditures on objects of public utility, and regarded money only as an instrument of beneficence.*

How easy would it be to protract to a volume this history of eminent men who have been most decidedly temperate! But I forbear. I shall, however, be met with the case of Dr. Samuel Johnson, as a triumphant proof that strong mental powers and great efforts may be connected with great excess in eating and drinking. Let it be recollected that the most laborious and successful of this man's literary labors, were performed before he had acquired the means of intemperance; while yet stern poverty and obscurity imposed upon him a necessity of being abstemious. Let it be remembered, also, that afterwards he found it necessary to be temperate and even abstinent periodically; and here lay the secret of his mental strength (Madden's Infirmities of Genius, Vol. 1, p. 178). *By abstinence from wine and suppers, says he, in his Prayers and Meditations, I obtained sudden and great relief; and had freedom of mind restored to me, which I have wanted for all this year, without being able to find any means of obtaining it* (Journal of Health, Vol. 8, p. 203). Nor should it be forgotten how dreadful were the sufferings of this powerful mind in consequence of intemperance: how it rendered him gross in his

manners, excessively irritable and overbearing in his temper, and how it kept him, *through fear of death, all his life-time subject to bondage.*

The influence of intemperance upon the character and happiness of other men of literary distinction, in modern times, were there room here to exhibit it, would serve to impress the reader more deeply with the importance of temperance; especially to men whose labors are chiefly intellectual. What dreadful havoc did excess in eating and drinking make upon Pope, and Byron, and Burns, and Dryden, and many other authors of distinction, alas! who might be named! Who would desire their fame, if he must possess their unlovely characters, and endure their dreadful sufferings! Had they been temperate, how happy might they have been in life, and how much higher might they have enrolled their names on the scale of genius and learning! To them life seemed to be for the most part only a curse and death only a *fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.*

#### *4. Temperance is eminently promotive of cheerful, healthful piety.*

An unruffled and serene state of mind is one of the most common, as well as most happy results, of temperance; as an opposite state of mind almost infallibly attends intemperate habits. The genuine calmness and self-possession of philosophy can never be enjoyed, except by him who refrains from unnatural stimulants of every kind, in food as well as drink. Nor can the pious man, who indulges his appetite beyond the demands of unsophisticated nature, escape those morbid and irregular actions of mind, which now lift the feelings into the region of enthusiasm, and now sink them into the abyss of despondency. So irregular, indeed, will be the emotions of such a man, that he can never judge correctly of their nature, nor determine whether they result from the excitement of the animal constitution, or from the operations of grace and truth. Hope, therefore, will be feeble and unsteady, and his whole religious character will partake of the morbid irregularity of the physical powers, and want that healthful vigor and steady consistency, which give to Christian example its greatest force. If that healthiness and vigor of piety are not exhibited by the temperate Christian, it will in almost every case be his own fault - an unnecessary and self-inflicted calamity.

Another effect of thorough temperance is to banish, or at least counteract in a great measure, a tendency to gloom and dejection of spirits. *The great majority of those complaints which are considered as purely mental, says a distinguished physician, such as irascibility, melancholy, timidity and irresolution, might be greatly remedied, if not entirely removed, by a proper system of temperance, and with very little medicine.* Now it is this melancholy, timidity, and irresolution, that render the piety of multitudes of professing Christians gloomy, unlovely, and repulsive. And in nine cases out of ten, their despondency would be changed into holy joy, and their sluggishness into untiring activity, were they to come up to the true standard of temperance in their dietetic habits. The most devoted piety, (if, indeed, it can exist along with excess in food,) can never expect this joy, nor practice this activity, until it be conjoined with thorough temperance. But it is incredible what a mountain it takes off from the soul to withhold from the stomach a few ounces of improper or unnecessary food. He who has made the trial, will feel how necessary and important is the caution of Christ; *Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged (borne down) with surfeiting.* The heart does, indeed, feel the pressure of excess in food more sensibly than the body; and it was not merely owing to his exalted piety, but in part because he *kept under his body and brought it into subjection*, that the heart of Paul was always so buoyant under the heaviest trials, and his hands so busy and strong in accomplishing his gigantic work. And it was the most thorough experience that led him to lay down the general principle, that *every man, that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things.*

Says one, nearly an hundred years old, who had been eminent for temperance, *Whereas many embrace a holy and contemplative life, teaching and preaching the great truths of religion - which is highly commendable - O that they would likewise betake themselves wholly to a regular and temperate life! They would then be considered as saints indeed upon earth, as those primitive Christians were, who observed so constant a temperance and lived so long: - And they would besides enjoy constant health and spirits, and be always happy within themselves; whereas they are now too often infirm and melancholy.*

##### *5. Temperance greatly increases a man's means of usefulness.*

It gives him firmer health and greater bodily vigor: and thus enables him, uninjured, to sustain a greater amount of physical and intellectual labor. The want of this corporeal energy meets us at almost every step, as an apology for scanty and inefficient efforts in the cause of benevolence and religion. Every man, therefore, whose heart burns to do good, and to push his conquests as far as possible into the usurped empire of sin and Satan, will feel it to be an invaluable blessing to be free from the invalid's debility and irresolution. And in a large majority of cases, men have only to practice the temperance which I advocate, in order to secure that vigor of body which can cheerfully and safely cope with efforts the most intense and protracted.

Nor is vigor and clearness of mind less essential to great and successful exertions in the cause of benevolence. And this too, is the fruit of temperance. The man given to dietetic excesses in a peculiar sense sees through a glass darkly; and the movements of his mind are sluggish and inefficient. But temperance takes off the incubus and imparts an almost unearthly elasticity to the intellect. And here is the grand secret of the astonishing amount of labor performed by some men of feeble constitution in past days. They have left behind them an influence that has already been felt in the four quarters of the globe, and which will descend to unborn generations.

Temperance tends likewise to impart a deeper tone of piety to the soul, and thus to rouse it to more efficient action in the cause of religion and humanity. And a low standard of piety is the grand reason why most Christians scarcely touch the cross with one of their fingers. Lift a man out of the slough of excess, and out of the murky atmosphere of animal indulgence, and the beams of the Sun of righteousness will shine bright and warm into his soul, through the cloudless medium of temperance. And under the genial influence the plants of holiness and trees of righteousness will expand, and bloom, and bring forth much fruit.

Finally, temperance enlarges a man's pecuniary means of usefulness. Who was ever thoroughly and habitually temperate and not industrious? And rarely does increased industry, in our country at least, fail of a pecuniary reward. Nor are Christians in general at all aware, how the curtailing of their unnatural bodily wants, would fill their coffers; nor how many unnecessary expenditures in furniture, dress, and equipage, would cheerfully be given up, were they to become truly and universally temperate. They now feel that their stinted charities to the treasury of benevolence are as great as their means will allow. But I doubt not that the day is at hand, when, through the redeeming influence of temperance, they will cast in ten times the amount, and feel it less than they now do their insignificant donations. Let temperance but prevail in the church of Christ, and it would be easy to fill the treasuries of all our benevolent societies, so that there should henceforth be no lack of money. O how delightful a change, to see every Christian, by means of greater bodily vigor and more elasticity and clearness of

mind, and a more ardent love to the Savior, and a resolute rejection of all superfluities, multiplying his efforts and means of doing good in a ten-fold ratio. Blessed fruits of temperance! Would that the bright vision might enkindle every disciple's heart, and arouse him to labor for so glorious a consummation!

Two inferences, and I have done.

*First: The world can never be converted till Christians adopt the general principles of this system of temperance in all things.*

The primitive Christians adopted and acted upon these principles; and, therefore, they found the means, the strength, and the courage, to carry the conquests of the Redeemer's cause into nearly every habitable land. Christians at the present day are engaged in the same glorious enterprise: but although their numbers and means are multiplied a hundred fold beyond those of Apostolic times, the work of the world's conversion moves on comparatively slow. We do not come up to the effort with the physical and moral preparation of primitive times. The standard of self-denial and labor and pecuniary sacrifice is yet among most of us exceedingly low. We know but little of the meaning of the phrase, Holiness to the Lord, which God commands us to write upon our possessions and ourselves. Nine-tenths of what God claims as his, we inscribe, Devoted devoted to *the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life*: devoted to the luxuries of the table - to dress - to entertainments - to equipage. In order to keep up even the present tardy movements of benevolence, it is necessary to keep in action a complicated and powerful array of agencies, and to press the cause upon Christians, (to their shame and humiliation be it spoken,) as though it were in a desperate state. And it must be so, until the principles of universal temperance and correspondent retrenchments are adopted by the church. Men cannot do much more than they now do, until they make this reformation. But in order to accomplish the world's conversion, they must increase their donations and prayers and self-denial a hundred fold. And it is matter of joy that temperance brings in her train the means for making such an increase. Oh what a day of triumph to this degraded and benighted world will that be, when Christians shall have learnt thus to send forth streams of salvation from the pure fountains of temperance! For,

*Secondly: The prevalence of universal temperance will usher in the millenium.*

And whatever else may be understood by the millenium, it certainly means the world's conversion. Now when the soldiers of the cross shall become also the soldiers of temperance, men enough can easily be obtained for this mighty work; men too, not merely prepared by hardihood of constitution for the enterprise, but with clear heads and pure devoted hearts. Nor will money be wanting, when men shall pour their superfluities into the treasury of the Lord. And when Christians enter into this work with the capability of physical endurance and the entire self-consecration of Apostolic times, that blessed divine influence which alone gives life and success to means, will go along with them from one conquest to another, until speedily *great voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever*. Happy, thrice happy period, when temperance and religion shall have poured their life-giving streams over every land! The principles of God's government do not permit either of these to complete the work alone. But issuing from the sanctuary in the same channels, they sweep away the strong holds of sin and Satan, and, at the same time, cause the wilderness to bud and blossom as the rose. The wail of human suffering is drowned and hushed in the general anthem of holy joy and praise. Man will still find, indeed, enough of sin and sorrow to show him that he does not inhabit a perfectly holy and happy world. But he will find, nevertheless, that where temperance and religion prevail, they neutralize the bitterness of that curse, which rests upon our fallen world; and bring back the essence of Eden's joys. Oh, Christian, gaze upon

this heavenly vision, until you feel its inspiration, and are led to exhibit in your example, a transcript of of Millenial Temperance, Millenial Piety, and Millenial Happiness.

(The subject to be concluded.)

## Sermon 507 [Funeral of Lucius Allis]

["Texts and subjects for sermons," unsorted packet, 1822 March,  
EOH Series 3, Sub-series E, Box 9, folder 23]

Genesis 15:15

*And thou shalt go to thy father's in peace;  
thou shalt be buried in a good old age.*

This is a part of the promise God made to Abraham when he satisfied his covenant with him by directing him to cut asunder a heifer and she goat of three years old and a ram of three years old and a turtle dove and a young pigeon. This was the current mode of satisfying a covenant and perhaps it intimated that he who broke it should in like manner be cut asunder.

This promise we know was fulfilled in the case of Abraham. After a life spent in the service of God he died at peace with God and man in the 175th year of his age.

The expression good old age is peculiar - used only three times in the scripture – Old age is not always good etc.

Invert the order of the text - I shall first consider what constitutes a good old age and secondly what is it for such an old man to die in peace.

In general terms a good life is necessary to constitute a good old age. Remarks on late conversions.

But to be more particular.

1. Such an one has been a friend and supporter of civil, literary social and religious institutions -
2. He is a man of faith. Such was Abraham- Hebrews 11:8-10.
3. He is a man of prayer. Such was Abraham - Case of Sodom. Prayer in public family - secret prayer for himself – family - in the world.
4. In short he is a man whose walk and conversation evince him to be seeking a better world.

Secondly this man in a good old age will go to his Father's in peace.

1. At peace with this fellow man
2. At peace with his own conscience.
3. At peace with his God.

Mark the perfect man and behold thee up, etc.

And my hearers may we not say of him whom we are about to commit to the tomb that he is going to his father in peace and is buried in a good old age? More than 50 years he has been I believe a study and firm supporter of civil literary, social and religious institutions in this place. For industry activity and persevering resolution - especially for his hospitality and friendly attentions to all he has been distinguished. He was remarkable for a punctual attendance upon religious worship on the sabbath and for more than 50 years has been a reputable member of the church in this place (He was one of the few pillars that remained among us who originally formed this church - others only remaining). And that he was a man of faith you who have seen him called to scenes of affliction who have seen him close the eyes of his partners of his life and other friends, you can testify to his faith. And I appeal to his surviving relations who have known him in domestic life whether he was not a man of prayer! Home numerous indeed must be the catalogue of the public, family and secret prayers!

A man of this general character although doubtless subject to many infirmities failings and sins as are the most devoted, we should expect would go to his fathers in peace. And such was the fact with regard to the deceased. His patience and resignation – and his confidence in his good estate through the merits of Christ became more and more apparent as he approached eternity. The world now lost its few remaining charms and the supreme boundless importance of eternity filled his soul. He now saw as every Christian on his death bed will see and lament that he had not done as much for God as he might have done and that the world had engrossed too large a share in his affections. Still however he felt a confidence that his sins and shortcomings in duty were forgiven and a review of the general tenor of his life gave him through the merits of his Saviour a calm and firm support in his conflict with the last enemy. God in mercy mitigated the agonies of dissolution and as we humbly hope he gently breathed out his soul into the hands of his Redeemer at peace with all mankind – at peace with his own soul and so peace with his own Lord.

*Blessed are the dead which which die in the Lord, etc.*

And this ye mourning friends is the consolation which God sends to support you in your bereavement – that you are permitted to sorrow not as those without hope. Oh had you seen your aged father in his last moments manifest the awful agonies of a soul unreconciled to God – earnestly longing for another hour to make his peace with this Maker and at length making the dreadful plunge in delirious horror the frightful picture might well have caused your eyes to flow with bitter tears and your hearts to ask with anguish again and again and under such circumstances feeble would be the consolations we could give you. But the good hope that your husband father friend is going to a better world is the charm can dry up your sorrows and silence every mourning sigh. And o what a powerful motive does it present before you to follow in the steps of your departed friend so far as he followed Christ - so that when you finish your mortal pilgrimage you may die at peace with man, at peace with your own conscience, and at peace with your God.

My hearers let us examine our hearts. Are we living in such a manner that should we reach old age it may be called a good old age? Are we living so that we shall not fear the approach of death whenever it comes? etc.

*[On back cover]*



At Captain Allis funeral 14<sup>th</sup> March 1822. *[Conway?]*

## Sermon 508 [O Lord Revive Thy Work]

["Oh Lord Revive Thy Work," Habakkuk 3:2, 1825 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 2]

Habbakkuk 3:2

*O Lord, revive thy work.*

*[A sermon about the need for a revival of religion. Hitchcock suggests his church is in decline.]*

This is one of the most important prayers that can be offered to the most high. It is not important merely in regard to the immediate object of it viz. the increase of the religion in the hearts of those already children of God: but still more important when considered in its consequences upon those destitute of religion. For it is the usual aspect of a revival of religion in the Christian heart to produce religion in many a sinners heart. For it is because there is so much of declension in the religion of the heads of a family that so few of their children are converted: and because so many of the church of Christ forget their first love therefore so few if you walking in the broad way of death are persuaded to turn into the strait and narrow path of life.

The prayer of which the text is a part was drawn from the holy heart of Nebuchadnezzar by looking forward in prophetic vision and witnessing a painful declension of vital religion among the Jews in future years. God had shown him how he should abandon that people to their own chosen ways and the prophet feeling for their wretched condition as if he had been one of their number in the true sympathizing Spirit of piety cries out - *O Lord I have heard thy speech and was afraid: O Lord revive thy work in the midst of the years (that is in the coming years of delusion and judgments) in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.* A prayer for the same interesting object has been heard often in the mouth of every good man since the days of his prophet as well as before.

It forms a prominent part of the Lord's prayer - *Thy kingdom come thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.* The kingdom of Christ cannot come where religion has declined without its revival. And Christ directs us to pray not merely that the will of God may be done in earth but that it may be done as it is done in heaven: that is this passage contains an intercession not merely that men may be pious but that they may be supremely and entirely so: and this can never be the case until a more powerful revival should visit the world than ever yet has been felt. On this account it is that the prayer of Nebuchadnezzar is proper for Christians in every place and condition. For even if religion be in some measure revived in their hearts and around them yet it is never so much so but it needs reviving still more in order to reach the standard pointed out by the Lord's prayer. The will of God is done by no individual and certainly by no community as it is in heaven. I defer however a consideration of the motives urging to the adoption of the prayer in the text to the second part of the discourse. And in the first place I shall attempt an explanation of what is meant by a revival of God's work.

And here to avoid misapprehension I shall make a few statements on the negative side of the question. A revival of God's work does not imply anything unreasonable or enthusiastic and this is very evident from the fact that it is God's works: and who will dare to say that there is any appearance of unworthiness or enthusiasm in what God does? The prophet says O Lord revive *thy* works not man's

work. Were a revival the work of man we might fear indeed that it would not always conform to truth and real piety. Indeed in almost every real revival there is a mixture of man's unhallowed work - for some obtain false hopes and this truly is not the work of God. Men may abuse the special influences of his Spirit now as easily as we know they could and did abuse his miraculous influences in apostolick times. But all this does not prove that a real revival is necessarily attended by unreasonableness or enthusiasm: for no one will apply such a charge to what God does. It merely shows that men may abuse anything. Yet on the other hand it does not follow but man - the unrenewed man may regard the purest revival ever experienced on earth as the mere fruit of enthusiastic zeal. Paul testifies expressly that the work of God's Spirit appears unreasonable to the natural man - *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God - for they are foolishness unto him*, etc. *The wisdom of this world, says he also, is foolishness with God*. And we know that when Paul in whose heart there always existed a revival was arranged by before Festus, that governor thought him mad. On the day of Pentecost too the Jews said concerning those actuated by a revival Spirit, *these men are full of new wine*. And if in cases of such undoubted revivals as these the charge of insanity be preferred: need we wonder that the same charge should still be brought against those revivals that have happened since that time in which there is sometimes seen a mixture of human infirmity and grossness?

Again it is not implied in a revival of religion that God is more ready to forgive sinners than than at any other period. In this respect God is the same yesterday today and forever. He is not like those earthly princes who on some particular days are peculiarly ready to forgive offenders: for since Christ has died he is ever ready to receive the returning and believing penitent. His terms of reconciliation are in every respect the same during a revival as every other season. True at such a season there is a greater probability that men will be converted than at ordinary times. Because in answer to the prayers of the Christian his Holy Spirit moves more powerfully upon the hearts of men to convince of sin of righteousness and of judgment to come. But this does not result from any increase implacability on the part of God or from his dispensing with one of the least terms of salvation.

Once more that same process is to be gone through during the revival of God's works as at any other time in order to meet his acceptance. The heart then as well as at any other period must yield itself unreservedly into the hands of God and a radical change be wrought in it turning its affections from earth to heaven - from worldly idols to the living God. The will must be subdued and made obedient to the divine commandments. There must be a cordial belief also on the Son of God: and nothing more and nothing less than all this is required of a man whenever he becomes religious.

Finally a revival of religion does not mean a mere feverish excitement of the animal feelings. Many can see nothing in such a work but the overwhelming influence of fear or the exciting impulse of sympathy. But if nothing more be present than these animal emotions it is not that kind of revival for which Habakkuk prayed - it is not that works in which souls are born into the kingdom of God: for neither fear nor sympathy ever prepared a man for a heaven of love. These passions might indeed and usually do excite the man's attention to the subject of religion but it needs an influence superadded of a very different character in order to convert him: for the believer is *born not of blood of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God*.

But though a revival of God's work does not mean these things yet it does mean something and something of great importance too. The fact that God is the agent is sufficient to prove this: and the prophet's prayer refers exclusively to his agency. As his benevolent heart was made to feel for the woes of a future race of his countrymen, it sent up a petition for that blessing which appeared most valuable - most calculated to counteract the wretchedness in which their sins involve them. And what was the

object of that petition? That God would revive his work. He certainly then supposed there was something in such a revival of very great value: and in order to ascertain what that was let us enquire where it is that God has commanded a work? Where but in the hearts of his children? True the material creation is his work: but that work is perfect when first executed and never can be said to decline and so every other work of God except the sanctification of the soul. This is progressive and needs not only the daily renewed agency of God but also the voluntary active cooperation of man. When man neglects thus to work but his salvation with fear and trembling while God works in him to will and to do religion of course must decline in his soul: and the longer he neglects this diligence in using the means of sanctification the weaker his resolution and disposition to obey become: and this makes it necessary for God to exert on the backslider a more efficacious influence in order to recover him from that downward course he has been treading and to lead him onwards with an accelerated step the strait and narrow way.

From this view of the subject we are led if I mistake not to clear apprehensions of the main thing in which a genuine revival consists. For God to revive his work signifies that he had caused a rapid increase in true religion in the hearts and lives of all such believers - especially those who have forgotten their first love. It is an increase of love to God and love to man - an increase of holiness - of faith of humility of charity - of brotherly love - and in short of every Christian grace. The individual is aroused to a deeper and more life stirring sense of eternal realities - of the values of his soul - of its danger from the world of the adversary and of the value and danger of the souls of the ungodly. Such views lead him into his closet which now becomes more familiar and more pleasant to him. There the prayer of Habakkuk with reference to himself and others - *O Lord revive thy work* - often goes up with fervency from his lips and his heart and divine influence descends in answer to the prayer of faith and his soul becomes stronger and stronger in the Lord. Thus is he prepared to go forth into the world and exhibit a brighter pattern of Christian character - to act less from a fear of man and more from the fear of God - to aim more at the good of others than his own welfare - and to go about with the constant impression that he may be the means of saving or destroying the souls of others according as his life conforms or not to the gospel.

But you may inquire where in this description of revival has anything been said about that most important part of it - the conversion of souls? The truth is in the true sense of the term the awakening and conversion of sinners is only a consequence and not a part of a revival. There is an impropriety in saying that God revives his work in the hearts of sinners: for he never commenced any work there and how can that be revived which never had any existence? This is a new creation: not a revivification. The term revival however as it is used at this day includes the conversion of sinners as well as the awakening of saints: yet there is evidently an impropriety and blending together the nature of the thing and its consequences. I do not hope however to resist the power of general usage - and if we now know that by a revival is understood not only its nature but its consequences perhaps a change would be hardly desirable. It is more important that we have hearts to pray for a revival of God's work than that we should have logical ideas of every term we use. I proceed therefore in the second place to suggest to the Christian certain leading motives inciting him to pray in faith, *O Lord revive thy works*.

And first time the time of religious declension is the period in which sin and Satan revive their work.

The termination of religious revival is the seed time for these enemies of God and man and the winter of religious declension is their harvest time. And they will continue to thrust in the sickle until the Lord appears to snatch souls out of their hands and save them from the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Oh it is distressing the heart of piety to witness the dreadful ravages of sin and Satan when the special influences of God's spirit are withdrawn! As the bewildered insect flutters

around the fascinating tapering at every succeeding revolution it draws nearer and nearer to ruin - so do the giddy multitudes of sinners whirl and whirl around some glittering worldly object heedless of their danger until they rushed into the blaze and their power of escape is gone and then they sink never to rise again. The Christian sees his nearest friends perhaps his children drawn into the giddy vortex and though he may warn and entreat he cannot break the charm until the Lord appears for his relief. Never did religious revival advance with half the power or half the rapidity as does the revival of sin when Christians sleep upon their posts and cry for a little sleep a little slumber. Iniquity comes in like a flood although unperceived by every human eye save that of the Christian. And when he does see it how can he resist the incitement it presents to pray in faith, *O Lord revive thy works!*

Secondly the consequences resulting to the Christian himself from revival present a strong argument to him to offer this prayer with perseverance.

How many are those who profess the gospel have just religion enough to make them miserable - just enough to keep conscience always awake to goad with its stings but not enough to give them peace and joy in believing - enough to prevent them from seeking religion as if they were careless sinners but not enough to make them bold and decided in the cause of Christ - enough to cause them to render a slavish service to Jehovah but not enough to make them relish and love it. Now what is it such persons most need? That the Lord should revive his work. For this will show them whether they belong to Christ or to the world and lead them to make a decided stand one way or the other. And is there a Christian to be found however advanced in holiness who does not need to have his graces quickened and his heart drawn more entirely into the work of serving his Master! What an interesting sight is it which is witnessed during a revival to behold the doubting Christian exclaiming, *come all ye that fear God and I will tell you what he has done to my soul!* To see the final question manifesting a real heartfelt fervency to see the worldly minded Christian say I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord by whom I am crucified to the world and the world to me - to see those Christians whose hearts have been filled with bitterness towards one another sacrificing their animosities on the altar of their common faith and to see the whole body of Christ professing people *look forth clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners*. And all this is the fruit of God's reviving his works: self interest then constrains the Christian fervently to pray for it.

Thirdly the Christian is incited to such a prayer by the happy consequences a revival will exert upon sinners. As you look around Christian upon your happy family circle and see among them wanted one and another destitute of religion although amiable in your eyes do you really believe that those dear children or that dear wife or husband must certainly perish forever and evidence the most dreadful agonies unless their hearts are changed? If you do believe if you know also that the prospect of that conversion is faint and almost hopeless unless there be a revival of God's work: for how seldom is it that men are renewed in time of religious declension. If then you would see your family converted if you would see your neighbors and friends around you turning to God - if you would see moral beauty succeeding moral desolation - Oh then pray - pray without ceasing for a revival.

Finally the ravages of death complete the list of motives for such a prayer. Could this king of terrors be bribed to lay aside his poisonous dart while religion declined and sin triumphed the Christian might neglect to raise such a cry to God. But this stern conqueror has closed his ears against all solicitations and he sees nothing but his victim. Nor does his heart any more relent when the unhappy wretch on whom he executes his commission is plunged into the lake of fire and brimstone beneath than when the happy soul is raised to a throne and a crown of glory above. Hence it is that he no more spares the professor of religion than him who despises it. He makes havoc in the church of Christ as well as in the

world. And if no revival of God's work fill up the vacancies what will become of the visible kingdom of Christ. Those occasional conversions that happen during a season of stupidity will by no means keep pace with the ravages death makes among its members: and who would wish the places of devoted Christians at the Lord's table to be occupied by unconverted unholy worldlings?

My brethren the demands death has made upon our number within a few years past have been great and alarming. And this day tells us that he by no means relaxes in those demands: for another of our number lies before us and though dead she speaks in a voice too loud to be disregarded by any save by the worldly minded professor of religion. Recollect that another praying soul has left us: nay recollect that within a few months two of our number whose prayers we have reason to believe daily ascended for a revival of religion have been taken from from one family. Forget not too that as the number of those who have an interest at the throne of grace decreases the less is the probability that we shall be blessed with a revival. Within three years and one half about one tenth of our number have been called out of the world: and at this rate only 35 years will be required to take away our whole number by death alone should none come forward to catch the falling mantels of their departing Christian friends. I say nothing hear of the more alarming case of those who crowd the gate of death without God and without hope: but looking merely to ourselves brethren - to our past experience and our future prospects is there not enough to arouse us all to feel that we must pray for and must have a revival. And what an argument to enforce this subject has the providence of God put into my hands today when I can point you to the newly opened grave gone of your number beneath the walls of this house whence issues a voice bidding you dareth your might: what your hand findeth to do - telling you that your time is short and what you do must be quickly done. I wish not to excite any sudden and transitory feelings on the subject. But I do wish I do so long - to have you muse upon it until the fire shall burn. I wish you to take hold of this work with deliberate and holy resolution to persevere in the prayer of the prophet, *O Lord revive thy work*. The first step for us all is to go into our closets and repeat our visits there and make thorough works of self-examination and secret prayer: and when our own hearts are lighted up and warmed by this unseen intercourse with heaven we shall be prepared to let our light shine before others - and then we may rest assured that God will use us as instruments of converting sinners. Oh that I could persuade you my brethren sincerely and resolutely and perseveringly to grasp this cause: for how can we any longer endure the heart rending picture of religion smothered and choking and dying. How can we leave the world until we witness once more the glorious triumphs of almighty grace!

Delivered

At Conway February 1825

At Williamsburg March 1825

At Charlemont March 1825

At Hadley Mills January 1828

At Amherst College February 1835

At Amherst West Parish February 1835

## Sermon 509 Exposition of the Eighth Chapter of Romans

[Exposition of Romans Ch. 8, 1825 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 3]

*[The sermon may be complete although it is possible the a last page (or sentence or phrase) is missing.]*

If the threatenings of the Gospel seem in inexorably severe and awful against the sinful and proud heart of man on the other hand the promises and consolations of that blessed book are poured out in profusion and almost without limitation for the comfort and joy of the believer. The chapter before us contains the most triumphant and animating series of inferences from the great doctrine of justification by faith the apostle had established in the former part of the epistle on unmovable ground. Although the unholy unsubdued heart can see nothing in that doctrine but cold and unprofitable speculation or a tendency to sin yet Paul could draw from it a multitude of rich and holy truths calculated to cheer and sustain and strengthen the child of God in his conflicts with the world the adversary and his heart. How triumphant he does begin!

Read 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> verses

Verses 1 – 2.

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

*The law of the Spirit of life* in Christ Jesus signifies the new principle implanted in the heart at regeneration by the Spirit of life and they who possessed this new principle were free from the law of sin or the habitual dominion of sin and would live not after the flesh but after the spirit not according to the corrupt dispositions but according to the teachings of the Holy Spirit - according to the laws of the Gospel. All this resulted from the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Verses 3 and 4.

*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The law was weak through the flesh because the flesh or man's corrupt nature prevented man from keeping it in every point and thus cut them off from the hope of justification by means of it. But the song God coming in the likeness of sinful man - although without sin and being made a sin offering -

exhibited the hateful nature of sin and showed God's condemnation of it in the flesh. And the object of his death was to impress the righteousness of the law upon the hearts of believers that they might fulfill it so far as was necessary to their acceptance through grace though not as a ground of justification. Believers could not but attempt a fulfillment of every one of the divine requirements.

Verse 5.

*For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;  
but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.*

It is important to ascertain the meaning of the word flesh in this and in several other verses of this chapter. And it cannot mean merely the body or the animal nature as some suppose: for in the 8<sup>th</sup> verse it is said, *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God*. Hence it would follow if flesh mean the body that no man while in the body or while on earth could please God which is grossly absurd and contrary to scripture. Nor is it scarcely less absurd to suppose that by being in the flesh means being under the Mosaic dispensation. It must therefore mean man's native sinful disposition derived from Adam and it is called flesh because the soul becomes the servant of the carnal propensities. The meaning then of the 5<sup>th</sup> verses is that they who follow the bent of their sinful inclinations and have never been renewed by the Spirit devote a supreme and exclusive regard to sensual and carnal objects while those born of water and the Spirit pursue with a supreme regard the things that are of a spiritual or religious character.

How strikingly in this truth exhibited in the world around us!

Verses 6, 7 and 8.

*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Unregenerate men then cannot please God!

Verse 9.

*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Have we the Spirit of Christ?



## Verses 10 and 11.

*And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

Paul speaks here of natural death *for by one man sin entered*, etc., and although death must triumph over the body because sin had triumphed over it the spirit - made holy by the blood and grace of Christ - would live forever: and even their bodies would hereafter be raised and quickened by the same power that brought Christ from the dead.

## Verses 12 and 13.

*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

All misery had been brought upon men by their conformity to the flesh or their carnal inclinations and therefore they are not at all indebted to it nor should live according to it. Inevitable destruction - everlasting death would be the consequence of following its dictates. But everlasting life the consequence of leading a life of holiness. Yet all who should lead holy lives were indebted for it to the Spirit of God.

## Verses 14 - 15 - 16 - 17.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

From verse 24 it appears that the Spirit is the great agent in producing holiness in man and that none are holy without his operations.

From the 15th verse it appears that real believers do not serve God from slavish fear but from filial love - *Abba* - a Syrian word for Father.

From the 16th verse it appears that the Spirit of God testifies to the Christian that he is a child of God.

1. By the holy affections he produces
2. By his fruits (Galatians 5 - 17 etc.) Not by any immediate voice or impulse.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> verse believers are represented as standing in the same relation to God as Christ does - what a blessed distinction!

By referring to suffering for Christ the apostle was led to an animating comparison between present sufferings and future glory.

#### Verse 18.

*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

And if Paul could say thus who may not say it! For what man ever understood more than he! ([????] of Mr. Bartlett)

The five following verses it must be confessed rest under a cloud. After repeated examination of them I acknowledge myself unable to arrive at certainly as to their meaning. We may rest assured however that the passage does not contain any essential doctrine of the gospel since we cannot suppose God would make that obscure on which the salvation of the soul depended.

Do any however feel it to be strange that any passage of scripture are left obscure? Unless we suppose a miracle it is not possible it should be otherwise since it is not possible that we should be acquainted with every custom or opinion to which allusion has made by one writing 1800 years ago. Such passages however although not understood by us were clear no doubt to those whom God intended to be benefited by them and therefore even this part of his *word did not return unto him void, but it accomplished that which he pleased, and prospered in the thing where to he sent it.*

Read from verses 19 to 23.

#### Verses 19 – 23.

*For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

If we could only determine the exact meaning of the words creature and creation which in the original

are the same in this passage we should find no difficulty in attaining to the true meaning of the whole paragraph. Some commentators among whom is Dr. Scott suppose creature and creative here means the whole inanimate and brute creation - all of which does indeed groan under the effects of sin. Others among whom are the Drs. Doddridge and MacKnight suppose mankind are here meant: and a late writer with perhaps as much or more plausibility than any other supposes that by creature is meant the new creature or the regenerate soul. As this translation may not be met with by many of my audience permit me to give it in the author's own words.

See *Christian Spectator* Vol. 3 p. 627.

#### Verses 24 - 25.

*For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

By being saved by hope Paul means that hope rather than actual possession is the Christians consolation. But objects of sense cannot properly be called objects of hope. The believer directs his eyes to a future state to joys more enduring and glorious than anything offered to the senses in this world.

#### Verse 26 - 27.

*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

The spirit does not make intercession for the believer in the same sense as Christ does: but by inspiring him with proper and earnest desires - after such objects as God will bestow in answer to prayer.

We learn from these verses that all acceptable prayer is prompted by the Spirit.

Do you then say that you are released from the duty of praying aright until the Spirit move upon you? Rather learn from here your desperate situation.

Proof of the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost.

How full of consolation to the afflicted and tired soul is the 28th verse! (Read it)

## Verse 28.

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*

Does it take off from the comfort to be derived from the passage that the promise applies only to those called according to God's purpose because this looks so much like the doctrine of election! Ah, why so unwilling to be in the hands of God if you really love him! Why so afraid of his purpose if you look upon him as a being of infinite holiness goodness and wisdom? And moreover if this verse seemed a hard saying what will you say that the next follow!

## Verses 29 - 30.

*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Did ever a more comprehensive and glorious thought into the mind of man! What a looking back into the eternity that is past: what a stretch forward into the eternity to come while this word this narrow isthmus is the connecting point - the theater where the past designs of the Deity are developing and his future intentions unfolding! Where is the man whose mind does not swell with the many ideas here expressed! And yet how clearly, how uncontrovertibly does the apostle here teach the doctrine of predestination to eternal life! How must a man to escape thus doctrine go in the very face of this passage! And my hearers if we cannot cordially join the apostle in this doctrine neither can we join him in that...

Delivered

At Conway April 1825

## Sermon 510 [Fast Day Proclamation]

["Fast Day," 1825 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 3]

*[Hitchcock's response to a proclamation from the state Chief Magistrate to fast and give thanksgiving; Hitchcock talks about the importance of religion in the young nation but insists that there be religious freedom. At the end he is particularly critical of violations of the Sabbath.]*

The objects of this past occasion are so well set forth in the proclamation of the acting Chief Magistrate of this Commonwealth that I know not a more profitable channel into which to direct your meditations than to enlarge upon the thoughts contained in that paper.

And first of all I cannot refrain from expressing the gratification I feel in finding in this proclamation so much that is Christian and so much that reminds us of our pious forefathers. The truth is it has become the fashion in these latter days for our chief magistrate not merely in this but another states - to present us with proclamations for Thanksgiving and fasts in which there is not even an illusion to any truth of the gospel or to revelation itself. I speak not here of any particular political party: for alas these deistal tracts are confined to no party. But it is painful to the Christian heart to observe so wide a departure from the simplicity and godly sincerity of our forefathers in the appointment of such special seasons of humiliation prayer and thanksgiving. I do not say that in all instances it proves in the authors a disbelief of the gospel: but it certainly looks like a dark scepticism and carries the impression that these fasts and thanksgivings are appointed rather to satisfy a vulgar superstition than because those who appoint them believe in their importance or heartily recommend their observance. *Look for a moment at the state of the case, says the late writer. We are a Christian nation - our institutions all bear Christian character - our laws have been framed from the time of Alfred upon the supposition that we are a Christian people - our Congress legislatures conventions ships of war and military establishments all retain in their service Christian ministers - not a witness can be admitted in a court of justice or a bale of goods into the customs house nor the rights of life liberty and property maintained in a legal process except by oath or affirmation upon a Christian bible; and yet our chief magistrates in their proclamations for religious worship decline to acknowledge that we are a Christian people or that Christianity is to be acknowledged among our national blessings. Further all places of public worship with the exception of three of four Jewish synagogues in which the people of this land are recommended to assemble for fasting and prayer are Christian churches - the individuals officiating and Christian ministers - the exercises and ceremonies observed are those of Christian worship and thanksgivings are for Christian privileges - and the prayers are for God's blessings through Jesus Christ our Lord and yet the sanction under which these assemblies meet and worship - the voice of the magistrate calling this great Christian people to their temples is for aught that appears in its tone and sentiment the voice of the deist. (Christian Spectator, vol. 4, p. 371)*

But to say no more on this topic I proceed to consider the proclamation that has called us together today. In its commencement it states the general objects of a fast viz. that *all religious communities and individuals might prostrate themselves at the same time before the throne of grace to acknowledge the insufficiency of their own strength and their manifold transgressions and to implore protection and forgiveness for not Being by home the very hairs of our heads are all numbered*. The custom of observing such a day our chief magistrates traces back no farther than our pious ancestors although he might have found it in the history of pious men in all ages. Yet the instance of our own forefathers was happily selected: for they were emphatically men of faith and prayer - not possessed of that mere mushroom

piety of modern times that springs up in a minute and perishes in a night: but firm and persevering lovers of truth and doers of the word as well as hearers. And although it has become so fashionable in these wise times to count our forefathers as stern illiberal bigots and superstitious devotees – and although many things in their conduct excite pain in the really pious heart yet let us also remember that the civil social literary and especially the religious privileges we so richly enjoy are the fruit of their fasting and praying and labouring. And while we reject their superstition and bigotry let us take care that we do not cast off their religion also - while we blush for their extravagances and bigotries let us also blush that we fall so far short of them in vital piety although favoured with such superior privileges.

It is a grand point in the suitable observance of a fast that we be made sensible how great has been our abuse of mercies. And in order to produce this self-incrimination it is necessary to enumerate our blessings and then compare our lives with the estimate the proclamation therefore begins with our religious blessings - that Almighty God led our ancestors from intolerance and persecution to this western wilderness to exercise and enjoy the sacred rights of conscience – that here his worship should be restored to the primitive purity and simplicity of the gospel and temples reared to his holy name in which he should be adored in spirit and in truth: that he taught them by his spirit to establish institutions of civil and religious equality and liberty in order which the rights of price of property and of persons are secured and the incalculable blessings of the gospel are freely enjoyed by all in their worship of the Deity according to the dictates of their own consciences with none to molest or make them afraid.

Here is a full and distinct recognition of our obligations to God for the glorious gospel communicated to us by his kindness towards our ancestors. This stands as it ought at the head of all other mercies because this is confessedly superior to all others. The reconciliation of a lost world to himself by Jesus Christ - so that all who believe might inherit everlasting life is the most glorious of all the displays ever made of the works of God. Without this all of the mercies would be only as the cordial given to the malefactor to strengthen him for execution. Until Christ came and accomplished this work the pall of everlasting death hung over all our race. What then shall we render to God for his unspeakable gift! What have we rendered to him!

*What have I done for him who died  
To save my wretched soul?  
Now are my follies multiplied  
Fast as the minutes roll.*

Our abuse of the gospel - my hearers – our neglect of the gospel - Oh it has been dreadful - and it would seem almost unpardonable! To neglect and to trample underfoot the Son of God this is a crime of the blackest stain and yet we are all guilty of it: and most of us have been guilty for a long course of years! And can such wickedness be forgiven! Not unless it is repented of: and this day is the time for performing that work.

But we are called upon in the passage of the proclamation just recited not merely to be grateful for the gospel in general terms but that God permits us has given to us better opportunities for understanding its truths than to most others. It is indeed of very little consequence though the gospel be in our hand if we do not know what it contains. This is strikingly illustrated in the history of Roman Catholic religion. No votaries have the gospel but it is in an unknown tongue and therefore they know not what it contains and hence it cannot influence the conduct or do them any good. But according to the proclamation, *God taught our ancestors by his spirit to establish civil and religious institutions in order that his worship should here be restored to the primitive purity and simplicity of the gospel.* There it is

plainly implied that the system of truth believed and taught by our fathers is the true system of the gospel for if their belief were essentially erroneous how would they restore the worship of God to the primitive purity and simplicity of the gospel? We are here called upon therefore to be grateful that we are made acquainted with the doctrines of the Reformation or the doctrine of grace which formed the faith of our forefathers. And when we look abroad over the earth and recollect to how many nominal Christians these glorious truths or the true gospel is perverted or concealed we cannot be sufficiently thankful that all lot is cast where is known the faith which has guided the whole army of the redeemed to glory. And yet what occasion have we for fasting humiliation and prayer that these pure and holy doctrines have exerted upon us no more of a common controlling influence. Eminently are they calculated to subdue our worldliness to purify our hearts and to give us a heavenly mind. But alas how does conscience testify against us because there is still so much of conformity to the world within us and so little transformation by the renewing of our minds. And what powerful reason for alarm have those among us who hold the truth in unrighteousness - on whom the doctrines of the cross have exerted no saving influence and who are while they profess to believe them live in direct opposition to their spirit and lie therefore continually exposed to the terrors of the Lord which they reveal! Oh it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for these.

But it is not merely for a knowledge of the gospel and its glorious truths that we are called upon to be thankful in the passage of the proclamation I have just quoted. Peculiar thanks are due to God for that religious liberty and equality that freedom from intolerance and persecution which are fathers obtained by fleeing from their native land and establishing themselves in spite of hardships sickness and death in the western wilderness. And this is indeed one of the richest boons a kind Providence has bestowed upon us. We have only to contrast our condition in this respect with that of most other nations in Christendom. And one of the most striking points of difference between us and them is that they have a particular form of religion established by law as a national religion but we have not. This attempted union of church and state and the overgrown religious establishment that have grown out of it is one of the severest curses Almighty God has ever visited upon his church or the world. Out of it have grown most of those persecutions which have so long been the disgrace of Christendom. It was a national religious establishment that drove our forefathers from the land of their birth: it was this that led some of them to the stake and the scaffold. And the lesson which was thus written with their blood has not been and I trust never will be forgotten by their descendants. God grant that the monopolizing principle of a national religious establishment may never find advocates in this land of the Pilgrims while one lingering drop of their blood shall run in the veins of their posterity. We dread - we detest that ecclesiastical pride and tyranny - that ambitious spirit among the clergy - that multiplication of sinecures and useless drones - that enormous disproportion of salaries which such a national establishment infallibly brings along with it. In England the establishment of this kind has perhaps been as much modified and soften down as in any nation under heaven. Yet the full history that establishment gives us a disclosure of facts - of ecclesiastical oppression and corruption - that makes the man of real piety unused to religious establishment shudder for those who dare thus to *make a gain of godliness*. The truth is - and it is one that runs through the gospel - that every man has a right to adopt just what views of religion he pleases and he may claim the protection of the laws in worshiping God in the manner he pleases unless he thereby disturb the peace and good order of society. And hence it undeniably follows that one religious denomination can claim no exclusive right to the to the patronage of the government. Whenever a government conduct towards a people on this principle their religious toleration and religious liberty are as perfect as they can be. And this is just our condition bestowed on us through the efforts of our forefathers whose intolerance and superstition and bigotry it is so common to hear ridiculed. The only weapons we are allowed to employ to bring those who differ from us to abandon their opinions is argument persuasion and the moral influence of our example. The moment we attempt

physical compulsion the civil law prevents our efforts. True even in such a state of things individuals may be liable sometimes to suffer a sort of persecution - that of unmerited obloquy and reproach. But very few are the instances where those who inflict it do not find it recoiling at length with redoubled fury upon their own heads. And even if any particular denomination of Christians endeavors to monopolize the favours and offices of government, such is the nature of our government that all the other denominations will unite in vindication of their rights and the offending sect will find itself severely punished for its ambitious attempt at usurpation. In short we do not see how in the present state of the world religious liberty can be more effectually secured by civil institutions than is the case in this favoured land.

But while this fact demands a tribute of most thanks let us this day pause and enquire what returns we have made for such a blessing? If we enjoy higher privileges than Christians in other nations it is reasonably expected that the fruits of religion should be more manifest in our lives. But my brethren how many examples of holiness and devoted obedience are held up to our view in the European world - that region of religious establishments which excite our highest admiration and make us blush for our deficiencies! Nay even from the very bosom of such establishments how often do there come forth examples of piety so bright as to throw very many of our religious characters altogether into the shade! This comparison should humble us and cause us to fear lest our religious liberty we so much boast of may be but so poorly improved may be taken from us and given those who bring forth the fruits of religious freedom in the cold regions of religious tyranny.

The proclamation next gives us a summary of our natural social literary and civil blessings and calls and on us to acknowledge the mercy of God *who inspired our forefathers with wisdom and strength to achieve the emancipation of our country from a foreign and oppressive yoke and to devise and perfect a system and union of free government under which we have been prospered above all the nations of the earth; who cast a lot in a country the salubrity of whose climate the contributes to diminish and mitigate our diseases and the fertility of whose soil furnishes abundant means for our comfort and subsistence; whose population is industrious and virtuous; with wise and faithful legislators with equitable salutary and humane laws and learned and upright judges to administer them.*

None of us will be disposed to deny the correctness of this description. For the prosperity of our country has been has been great almost beyond parallel and her institutions are made the model of almost every state that rises to independence. I am called however on such a day as this to notice two circumstances that are causes of alarm in regard to the permanence of our prosperity and institutions. The infidel will smile but the Christian will sigh when I say that one of the circumstances is the fact that in the charter of rights - the Constitution of United States - neither the being nor the providence of God are recognized. How alarming is such an omission in an instrument so solemn and so important for the security and happiness of a great people. *Neither let us be accused of superstition says a late writer when we say that such an omission whether designed or accidental looks down with fearful aspect upon the destinies of this country. It speaks from the Congress chamber and its implied language is there is no God and should we in the course of revolutions be swept away in the ruin of the nations that forget God it will be enough to silence complaint and seal our woe for the destroying angel to point us the record of that instrument in the chancery of heaven. (Christian Spectator, vol. 4, p. 373) [M. Bruen, 1822]*

Another circumstance of alarm is the forgetfulness of God and violation of his commands that manifests itself but too frequently among those who are exalted to high and responsible stations in our government. If those who rule us believed as the proclamation asserts that God is the author of all our civil and social privileges and that he only can continue them unimpaired we should have nothing to



fear. And therefore it was with peculiar satisfaction to the Christian that the present Chief Magistrate of this nation was heard to say - and we trust he said it in sincerity in his inaugural speech – *Knowing that except the Lord keep this city the watchman waketh*. Yet in vain with fervent applications for his favour to his overruling Providence I commit with humble but fearless confidence at some point in the future destroyers of my country. But on the other hand it seizes the Christian with peculiar pain that the holy sabbath has come by some of our rulers to be systematically and publicly violated. We have had some recent instances of this character of a painful nature. It does not lessen but increases the necessity of entering a decided protest against such violations because they are the work of men high in office. I feel called upon therefore to read the following account from the *National Intelligencer*, a paper published at Washington February 2<sup>nd</sup>. (Read from *Recorder* of March 12, 1825.)

If a stranger profane the day of God be lewdling or unholy mirth it tends greatly to weaken a respect for it in the minds of the gay and thoughtless: this effect is still more visible if one of our friends be guilty of the same conduct. What then must be the effect when the principal members of our national government thus go in the face of God's holy law commanding all to *remember the sabbath day*, etc. If I do not mistake we see an instance of the effect of this very example in the following account from an Albany paper about six weeks after the affair at Washington. (Read *Weekly Messenger* March 24, 1824 – 25)

I quote these instances my hearers and alas might add several more to them - because to my mind they forebode the judgment of God upon our land. For severe national chastisements have almost always been preceded by a gross violation of the sabbath. I do think therefore that amid our thanksgiving for our civil blessings we are most solemnly called upon to humble ourselves this day and tomorrow morning before God on account of the flagrant violations of his holy day. The prayers and humiliations of Christians may avert the bolt of Jehovah's vengeance that hangs over us for this sin: otherwise it must burst upon us like a explosion.

Delivered

At Conway first day April 1825

## Sermon 511 [Fast Day]

["Fast Day", 1825 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 3]

*[This is a continuation of Sermon 510 about the Fast Day proclamation.]*

Our hearts are not prepared to pray acceptably for any blessing we need until they have thoroughly and deeply repented of every sin. It was the object of that part of the proclamation under consideration in the morning to excite this repentance: and if the compendious summary of our blessings included in our religious civil social natural and literary privileges did not produce that effect it was because we have no adequate sense how great has been our abuse of the Divine bounties. But if we felt as we ought we could join the author of the proclamation in saying, *it becomes us with humility and deep contrition to confess our ingratitude our multiplied and aggravated offenses in our unworthiness of the least of his favours; and fervently to supplicate his forgiveness through the intercession and merits of our Mediator and Redeemer.* O yes my hearers it must be through our Saviour's merits alone: for there can be mercy no where else. Such sins as ours would sink us if there were no one to bear the curse for us - no one mighty to intervene for us before an holy God. If we exercise in that we Redeemer a genuine faith we shall receive pardon and be in the proper frame for interceding for the various mercies we need for time and eternity - for body and soul. Let us not forget however that it is through God's grace alone as the proclamation declares that our sins have been remitted and therefore it is only through grace that we can hope for future favours. How cordially will every Christian's heart respond to this sentiment! For it was grace that moved God to devise in the counsels of eternity a plan for his rescue - it was grace that spared not his own Son - it was grace that charged the believers heart - and it is grace that will carry him forward amid a thousand enemies to the mansions of holiness and glory above.

The first part of the petition recommended to our adoption is *that God will preserve peace within our borders and that wars and rumours of wars may be heard no more in the land.* Who that reflects on the origin of wars does not respond to this sentiment: *For from whence come wars and fighting amongst you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members?* The proud and high-spirited politician who is loud in his profession of his patriotism honorably feeling and the like will look upon this account of the source of war although written by an apostle as unjust. At least he will endeavor to throw all the blame upon his enemies who have offered an insult to the national character or violated some point of etiquette or in some other way equally trifling have stirred up his pride and sharpened his appetite for revenge. But the history of the world and future judgment will show that the apostle is right in thus charging all wars upon man's unholy lusts. How ardently then ought we to pray that our happy country may never be subject to the dominion of these lusts - that she may resolve that she never will engage in a war of offense and not be seduced into a conflict of any such phantoms as national honor national glory and the like.

The next petition our Chief Magistrate recommends to us is that *God will deign to sanction our civil institutions and confirm the basics on which they are placed by the equal suffrages of a free people.* And that is a heart unworthy the name of Americans that cannot and does not join in this prayer. For cast your eyes over the wide world and enquire where there is a nation so blessed in its civil institutions as ours? Where a government we should desire to exchange for our own - where a people more free and happy? But let us remember that however ardently we pray God to continue to us these civil privileges

he will not hear us unless we obey his will. If we violate his sabbaths if we profane his name if we feel no gratitude for his goodness - if we indulge in the lusts of the flesh the lusts of the eye and the pride of life no power in heaven or earth can turn aside his judgments. Wicked nations are an abomination in his sight - a smoke in his nostrils - and he will not spare them nor hear their cry unless they repent and reform.

The next supplication recommended to us in which we shall all be ready enough to unite viz. *that God in whose hand is the breath of all mankind will keep us from the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noon day.* Men offer up this prayer with great fervency and less submission than any other although we know it will not be answered to the extent we ask it. We know that the pestilence and noonday destruction will come because it is appointed unto men once to die and never yet has a year passed in which they have not visited the earth. Well therefore it is not improper to pray that we may be exempted from sickness it is the part of Christian wisdom to prepare for it and the part of Christian prudence to calculate upon the ravages of sickness and death in larger proportion doing this than in any preceding year. We deserve such a visitation.

The next part of the prayer recommended to us is not merely for health of body but for health of mind - *that God will give us health of body and peace of mind; will chasten the desires of our hearts and subdue the turbulence of our passions that all the days of our lives may be days of tranquility and happiness.* This prayer can be equalled in importance only by the value of the human soul. What is implied in this position? One thing is that we may become real children of God born not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever. In other words we pray that we may sincere and real Christians for genuine peace of mind is possessed by no other men on earth. The worldling with all his acquisitions of wealth and honor does not possess it. The philosopher with all his apparent calmness and charming and professed contempt of the world is not possess it. There is no principle or system on earth that can give a man genuine peace of mind and tranquility but the gospel of Jesus Christ: but this produces that peace of God which passeth understanding.

It may be too that when we pray for peace of mind and trust our passions may be chastened and subdued we indirectly pray for afflictions and trials of the severest kind. For in many instances God can accomplish our wishes for this peace in no other way but by severe trials. We must have the idol that we love more than him taken away or we never shall love God supremely: we must be brought on the bed of sickness that we may feel the uncertainty of health we must have the world frown upon us and its possessions wrenched from us that we may feel its vanity and barrenness. We must bury earthly friends that we may cleave closer to our heaven by friend and Father. And probably many of the severe trials under which the righteous man is bowed may be only an answer to his daily prayers for an increase of holiness and heavenly mindedness. It would be wrong indeed for us to pray directly for afflictions: because we do not know but they would have an unhappy effect upon us. But it is right to pray for holiness and peace and leave it to God to determine by what means these blessings shall be bestowed upon us. And if he sees it necessary that they come through the medium of sharp trials we should kiss the rod and bless him who hath appointed it. Yet if such is the indirect implication of prayer the proclamation recommends how many of us are there who would shrink from sincerely offering it up!

The next part of the petition which our Chief Magistrate invites us to join him in offering to day is in behalf of the agriculturist the manufacturer the mechanic the merchant the sailor and the fisherman. These various professions in well balanced proportions are indeed necessary to make up a civilized society and to provide those numerous conveniences and luxuries that are now so common not merely in the parlors of the rich but even the humble cottage. But when we look back upon the past years and

recollect how immense has been the abuse of the products of the earth and of the deep and of commerce and manufacture and the arts of which men have been guilty who does not almost tremble to ask of heaven a continuance of its smiles upon them! How immense the sums squandered away to gratify the love of equipage and show which ought to have been bestowed upon objects of utility charity or benevolence! What sums of money and of the labours of the merchant the mechanic and the manufacturer have been prostituted to the vile purposes of ambition to carry on wars and to gratify the panders of tyranny! What countless waste has been seen on the table of the epicure and in the cups of the intemperate! In short how very small a part of the surplus products of the field the ocean and the workshop have been devoted to those objects God approves: and how large the amount bestowed upon those which he disapproves! How little to promote his glory and how much to dishonor him and his cause! If with a sense of all this waste we have still courage to pray that God would continue his smiles upon our ordinary employments let us pray with still greater fervency that he would bestow on us grace to use his bounties as not abusing them or ourselves thereby.

The petition that next claims our attention is in behalf of our seminaries of learning from our university through the grades of college and academy down to the humblest district school. Do you say that if these are well-regulated it is a matter of indifference whether they are prayed for or not since they will be prosperous and accomplish the object! What object? Do you mean merely the instruction of your children in the common branches of human learning? But the governor of this commonwealth and the laws of this commonwealth and the testimony of reason and the experience of the wise and good unite in telling us that there is a higher object than this to be obtained by these institutions. They should become museums of piety – or else mere learning will only fit our youth for becoming greater nuisances to society. It is highly necessary therefore that we should pray that those who are at the head of our schools of every grade may be men who will themselves pray and set a pious example and give pious counsel. In answer to such prayers in former years God has frequently poured out his Spirit and turned the hearts of many of our youth of talents to the lore and service of Jehovah and thus given one of the deadliest blows to the empire of Satan that could be inflicted. And as similar effects flow from similar causes we may hope again to see the works of the Lord revived in all our seminaries of learning if we sincerely pray for it. The good laws of this commonwealth require that those who instruct our common district schools should teach their pupils the principles of piety as well as of science: While therefore we pray for such schools we shall if our prayers are sincere see to it that those who instruct them do not neglect this important part of the duty – or rather we shall not employ those who will not attend to it.

The next petition (which may we all heartily join) is on behalf of those who preach the everlasting gospel – *that the ministers of the gospel while they exert themselves to maintain and vindicate the truth may be endued with a Spirit of candour charity and brotherly affection towards each other and towards all mankind not condemning those who may differ from them leaving them to the justice and mercy of the common judge and Father of all.* Such a spirit as is here described – a spirit of candour charity and brotherly affection is one after which the ministers of the gospel should ardently aspire. Is the chief ornament and glory of their character. It does not imply however that they should be indifferent to the truth and open their communion alike to those who embrace the truth and to those who follow after error. Nor does our Chief Magistrate intend such a sort of charity and candour as this: for he expressly asks that while they exert themselves to maintain and vindicate the truth they may be endued with a spirit of candour charity etc. To many however it seems utterly impossible that a minister should be a strenuous defender of a certain system of doctrines which he finds in the bible and yet be candid and charitable. But the charity of the gospel which is recommended in the proclamation is perfectly consistent with the firm belief that certain doctrines are essential to salvation and that those who do not believe them are in dangerous error and consistent with refusing to extend to them the right hand

of fellowship. No man was ever more charitable and candid than Paul and yet he says, *a man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject*. And John exhibits another example of gospel charity when he says, *if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine receive him not into your house neither bid him God speed. Believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God for many false prophets have gone out into the world*. Just such views may ministers have at this day concerning their brethren and yet no more violate gospel character and candor than did Paul and John. They may exercise the most perfect impartiality and kindness towards the very persons whom they sincerely believe to have embraced dangerous errors. They may and ought to feel a great tenderness and kindness towards the very persons whom on account of their errors they cannot in conscience admit to their fellowship. They may and Ought to pray for them daily in their closets and as citizens entertain friendly feelings towards them. Unless the minister of the gospel do make a distinction of this kind between those who embrace and those who reject what they conscientiously believe to be the essentials of the Gospel - how can they be said to exert themselves to maintain and vindicate the truth? If to day they assert in the pulpit that certain truths are essential and tomorrow take a man by the hand and call him a Christian brother who denies these truths everybody would see that he denied in practice what he maintained in theory. But you say that the minister by refusing such an one his fellowship is guilty of condemning him. No: he does not condemn the man but his errors: and it is because this distinction is not observed that conscientious ministers are so often regarded as unearned and uncharitable. The truth is we must condemn the principles of a man be he professed minister of the gospel or not whom we sincerely believe denies the fundamentals of the gospel and we are bound in faithfulness to Christ to exert the weight of our influence more or less against his errors. At the same time we may feel in our hearts a real friendship so far as this world is concerned towards him. To condemn the man - to declare that he cannot be accepted of God - is taking the place of God and presumptuously sitting in judgment upon a fellow man whose heart we cannot know certainly and are therefore forbidden to judge it. Men have indeed assured such a prerogative as this; but it an unacceptable assumption of power and it is important to pray that they may do it no more and that they may never withhold their candor and charity and kindness and friendly feeling and even brotherly affection from those whose errors they regard as essentially dangerous. It is every minister's duty to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints but no minister no man is allowed to judge the hearts of others: that belongs alone to God - who alone knows the heart: and while we feel compelled to protest against a man's errors - against what we honestly believe to be errors - we are bound to leave the man himself as the proclamation well expresses it *to the justice and mercy of the common judge and Father of all*. If ministers do this and no more if while they conscientiously condemn the errors of a man they do not condemn the man himself but treat him kindly and leave him the justice and mercy of God why is it that such a prejudice should be excited against them because they cannot admit to their fellowship those who deny what in conscience they believe to be essential to salvation when they cannot do this without violating what they consider to be their duty to God. It is an attempt to use them to do that which conscience prevents them to do: and if this be not persecution for conscience's sake I know not what can be.

The last petition to which our attention is called relates to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth: viz. that *He who has promised that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea will graciously vouchsafe his blessings upon the laudable exertions of good men to disseminate a knowledge of His holy scriptures throughout the world that the benign influences of Christianity may be universally seen and felt that pure and undefiled religion may prevail in every heart and all the ends of the earth see the salvation of God*. There is not in this petition as there should not be in any thing sectarian but it embraces all those benevolent efforts which Christians of every denomination are making at this day to send the gospel to the heathen whether through the channel of

the bible society or the missionary society or the education society or the tract society: for the direct object of all this is to disseminate knowledge of the holy scriptures throughout the world. And cold and selfish must be that heart which when it looks around among us and sees the blessed effects of the bible and then looks over the wide waters of hedonism and mahometanism - does not join most freely in this prayer of our Chief Magistrate. The past successes of missionary enterprises too furnish additional motive and encouragement to such a prayer. No less than 50,000 souls have been hopefully brought into the kingdom of Christ and have professed the faith of the gospel through the efforts of missionaries in modern times. This fact stands attested by him by unquestionable authority and who does not see in it the faint dawns of millennial glory. O Christians pray without ceasing for the approach of that day and if you pray in faith you will redouble your efforts and your sacrifices to promote this work. He that prefers standing idle can do it if he pleases: but God will find other instruments and carry it forward and the glory will be the God's but the shame his who came not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

Such is a well digested summary of the prayers for public objects that we are called upon to offer up today. Those of a private character are known only to ourselves and when we go into our closets to present these let us remember all those objects that have been brought in review before us. Especially my brethren let us plead with God that his kingdom may be built up in this place as well as among the heathen – while at the same time we deeply mourn over our backslidings. If such seasons as this do not tend to recover us from our lukewarm states they tend to sink us deeper and deeper in guilt and apostacy. Oh when the great last day shall reveal the secrets of men may it be found that this day in this place many a Jacob has wrestled in his closet and many an Israel prevailed. May it be found that this day was as life from the dead to our souls!

Delivered

At Conway Fast day April 1825

## Sermon 512 [Escape for Thy Life]

[Genesis 19:17, 1825 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 4]

Genesis 19:17

*Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain.  
Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*

*[An allegory based on the story of Lot and his wife.]*

Although this exultation was originally addressed to Lot just before the destruction of Sodom yet it is a just representation to the case of every impenitent man. In a spiritual sense the world is a Sodom over which a storm of divine wrath impends and the cross of Christ is the only place of safety to which we can flee to escape it. In this discourse I intend to make such an application of the words: and shall consider

First the locations of unconverted man

And secondly the excuses they make for neglecting to escape from the place of destruction.

Between the city of Sodom and the mountains to which Lot was directed to flee it seems there was a plain of considerable extent: and it was as dangerous for him to stop upon this plain as to have remained in the city. So in religion there is quite an interval between the most abandoned and corrupt sinners who dwell in the centre of spiritual Sodom and those moral and amiable persons who are near the line dividing the sinners from the saint – and the region of danger from that of safety. While the scriptures tell us of some who are stout hearted and far from righteousness they describe others who are not far from the kingdom of heaven: and so there is every grade of simple character between these extremes. But whenever men are located over the broad plain of morality and self-righteousness they are in constant danger because they have not escaped to the mountain. It becomes therefore important to be more particular in describing those who dwell either in the city or on the plain.

Those who dwell in the very heart of Sodom or the world are characterized by acting agreeable to their religious principles or rather to their want of principle. You there see the pantheist and materialist whose motto is, *let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die and death is an eternal sleep*. There too dwells the sceptic whose unbounded charity looks upon all religion with nearly an equal eye regarding them all as well enough and nearly of equal value – though to have no religion is rather the best of all. He can talk loudly of charity over the intoxicating bowl and perform his highest religious act in a Bacchanalian song. Next to him you see the man who fancies that all men will be either annihilated or made happy in heaven and who are whose life is conformed to such sentiments. In the same company stands the man who is in the habit of profaning the name of Jehovah - and he who makes use of religion to furnish matter for a jest or for ridicule and sport. Next to him stands the sabbath breaker who has persuaded himself that there is no holy time for the worship of Jehovah because he wish to have none. Of the same number is the extortioner - by whatever name he be called among men. As the grand aim of his life is to obtain money he must have cast off the fear of God and other restraints of religion and conscience.

*[The remainder of this paragraph transcribed below has been crossed out in pencil.]*

Scattered among these may be found a countless host given to work wickedness greedily - among whom are seen the gambler, the sot, the adulterer, the fornicator, the thief, the liar, and a list too long to be enumerated. These make up the dense population of spiritual Sodom - the heart of the corrupt and abandoned world - where the storm of divine wrath will rage most hotly.

But the suburbs of that city too are peopled by not a few. A large space is occupied by the moral sceptic who while he acknowledges some general truths of natural religion rejects all that is peculiar and humbling in the gospel. But his principles do not exert so demoralizing an influence on his life as would be their natural effect because it is a part of his system of belief that a correct morality is necessary to render a man acceptable in the sight of God. He can talk jealously and indignantly of the vileness of those who dwell in the heart of Sodom and because he dwells in the suburbs he fancies himself in safety. But since his restraints are external and do not search the heart which is rotten notwithstanding his visible morality and since his life differs from that of the overly corrupt only in the refinement of his unholy God will not hold him guiltless and the approaching storm must involve him in its fury.

A little further from the city dwells the self-righteous Pharisee. Christ crucified is to him a stumbling blocking and foolishness. This proud heart is willing to be saved through its own merits but not for the Lord our righteousness. He is one of those who go about to establish their own righteousness but will not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. He fancies himself at an infinite remove from the openly abandoned: and so he is in external conduct. But their hearts do not essentially differ: both are found carnal - unhumbled and therefore alike exposed to the divine indignation.

Still farther from the city and nearer the mountain we find established the man who is halting between two opinions - who neither believes nor disbelieves doctrines of the gospel for the simple reason that he has never thought seriously upon the subject of religion. Some worldly object has so engrossed him that he has never learned to feel that there is a heaven or a hell and he knows nothing of that storm of divine wrath that is gathering over his head.

Removed yet farther from the centre of corruption is the man who has yielded the assent of his understanding to the truths of the gospel but whose heart is not thereby transformed or his life essentially changed. There are many of this description - some of them very amiable and some of them very near the line separating the plains of destruction from the mount of salvation. They seem to want nothing but to step across that line to make them all we could wish. But a part of them are sitting inactive through a mistaken apprehension that such is the way to induce God to compel them to accept of the Saviour (a delusion fatal as death) while others suffer the world to exert such power upon them as to cripple all their good resolutions and to leave them still in the power of sin and exposed to the storm that must ere long envelop them in the ruin of Sodom.

I shall mention just one other class who seem as it were bending over the line between sin and holiness between heaven and hell between destruction and safety. I mean such as not only believe the terrors of God but are awoken to a deep sense of their wretched and dangerous condition. God has taken hold of their hand as he did that of Lot and is endeavouring to lead them up the mountain of safety to the fountain of a Saviour's blood. But they are steadfastly resisting his Spirit although they imagine that they are exerting themselves to give up their hearts to his influence. But unless they do submit there will be an awful destruction: *for he that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy.*



Such is the location of impenitent men as it respects the mountain of safety. I proceed secondly to consider the reasons that prevent them from escaping for their lives from the city and plain devoted to destruction.

And it does not rise as soon as sinners sometimes suppose from any inseparable obstacles in the way. In fact there is no obstacle in the way but the want of an inclination to love and serve God. Any man whose heart is as sincerely engaged and whose efforts are as great to obtain religion as to obtain the riches or honors or pleasures of the world is certain of obtaining religion. It cannot be denied that there are a thousand promises in the bible ensuring genuine religion to everyone who through love to it seeks for it in the appropriate way. Every obstacle that did exist on the part of God to a reconciliation has been taken out of the way by the incarnations and sufferings of Christ so that the whole difficulty now lies with the sinner. And although thousands seek religion with strong crying and tears who never obtain it yet such seek it altogether through a selfish spirit - and with entirely wrong motives. They do not love the religion which reason and conscience tell them they must have or perish. They cry to God for religion just as the sick man does to the physician for some remedy which he nauseates but which he knows he must receive or perish. But of what use would sacrilege be to a man should God grant it? It would not prepare him for heaven but for a hell in heaven. It is only when the affections are set upon religion that it becomes any value. And let the sinner search as long as he may he cannot discover anything but his criminal indisposition that prevents him from setting his affections on objects that are in their nature supremely lovely.

Nor do men neglect to escape for their lives to the Saviour because they are in no real danger. Their danger is imminent and terrific as it is possible for the imagination to picture. They are constantly exposed to the eternal and unattenuated wrath of Him who is angry with the wicked every day. To deny this is perfect madness after what is said in the bible. We might with as much reason undertake to prove that fire will not burn or that men do not die.

Neither do sinners remain in Sodom because there is any other way of escape but through a Saviour Lord Jesus Christ. For *there is none other name under heaven given among men etc. If ye believe not that I am he, says Christ, ye shall die in your sins. Nay he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed on the only begotten Son of God.*

An unholy heart then is the grand reason why impenitent sinners do not immediately flee to the Saviour. But there are particular circumstances that seem to fortify that heart against the powerful efforts of God and all holy beings to make it humble and happy. To some of these let us attend.

1. Some do not escape from spiritual Sodom to the mountain safety because they do not believe themselves to be in danger. This was the case with the Lot's sons in law in literal Sodom: and when he urged them to flee because the Lord would destroy that the place *he seemed unto them as one that mocked*. He saw no signs of such a catastrophe: the sun shone as brightly and all was as calm and happy in nature as in preceding days - and how very improbable the story but they were so near destruction. And in the same manner reason some impenitent sinners. They look upon hell torments to be the mere fiction of the brain and do not believe that the God who makes the earth so beautiful around them and gives them so many favours here will punish them so severely hereafter. But how awful will be their disappointment when they see the sudden clouds rising and hear the thunder roaring and the lightning playing around them. And from the withering storm of eternal wrath they find there is no escape! And as certain as there is a God in heaven that day is coming.

2. Some do not escape to a place of safety because they imagine the danger to be distant. They do not deny but there is danger for those who die impenitent but they are young and vigorous and there will be sufficient time hereafter to flee from this destruction. They do not like to be urged so briskly - they do not mean to be frightened into religion. They wish to examine it more before they embrace it. They do not like these instantaneous changes that so often cast a man into a worse situation than ever. Religion is a grand rational thing and they intend gradually to become religious. Alas! How thick are the scales upon the eyes of such! How little do they imagine that in thus procrastinating they are sealing up their eternal doom! Certain it is that until they realize that *now is the accepted time*, etc. they will never flee to a place of safety.

3. Some do not escape out of Sodom because their attachment to it is so strong while in Christ they can see neither for form nor comeliness. Could they carry with them their worldly possessions and honors and pleasures they would remove. But they know that to hurry away as the text commands they must leave all behind: and indeed the Saviour requires that they forsake all if they would follow him. Now although they are satisfied that they are in some danger yet it is not imminent enough to break off their affections for the objects of time and sense. This was the case with the wife of Lot. She felt so much alarmed as to set out to escape: but her heart lingered still upon the objects of attachment she had left: and she could not resist the inclination to turn around and bestow upon them one parting look of affection and she became a pillar of salt - a monument of divine vengeance. And many since her day who had begun to follow Christ have turned back - who have put their hands to the plough - have been made monuments no less awful of the wrath of God - being given over to reprobate minds and made vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

4. Some neglect to escape from Sodom because other especially their friends remain in it. I know of many says one - men of the greatest talents and discernment - who do not believe in the necessity of a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation - or if they believe this in general terms they regard the common notions of a change of heart as sheer delusion. These men do not think it necessary to escape for their lives from the world - they declare that it is right to enjoy the world and not to practice a monkish self-denial. And why are not these men apt to be right as those who urge me *not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world and to make myself a new heart and a new spirit?*

All my friends say another even my parents and brothers and sisters and companions neglect religion and look upon me as deluded or frightened if I attend to it. And how can I leave father and mother brother and sister - husband or wife when it may be they are right and will finally be saved?

Let it be remembered that if learned men and our own intimate friends are safe in neglecting religion it will not place us in an unsafe condition to attend to it: and therefore if there be only a bare possibility that there is any really need of attending to it it is the part of wisdom to come out decidedly on the Lord's side: for if they prove to have been mistaken we shall if we follow them here be punished with them hereafter. It cannot be too deeply impressed on all our minds that in the things of religion we must act for ourselves and another cannot act for us. And we have a right which no man may take from us given by the God who created us to adopt those opinions and that course of conduct which conscience and the bible dictate.

In the things of religion the master has no right to control his servant nor the husband his wife nor the parent his child - nor are the servant or the wife or the child under any obligation to obey and if they do obey contrary to the dictates of conscience God will abandon them to ruin. Nor will it be any alleviation to our agony in perdition to find that many learned men and many companions and our own nearest

and dearest friends on earth are sharing with us the same endless woe. Again I say in the things of religion we must ask ourselves: and if our friends will not flee with us out of Sodom we must like Lot and his daughters escape alone.

5. Some will not flee to the mountain because they suppose they have nothing to do but to wait till God drag them irresistibly out of the devoted city. They feel as if it were not enough that God should warn them of their danger and provide a place of safety a city of refuge and give them all the natural powers necessary to make their escape. We know they have crippled themselves and imbibed so strong an attachment for the vanities of the world that religious things have no attractions they feel as if God were under obligation to give them another disposition and absolutely compelled them to flee to the Saviour. And hence they feel as if they had nothing to do but to wait patiently till God shall please to pull them out of the fire. And it is to be feared that multitudes have waited in reliance on such a delusion and unreasonable hope till the floodgates of eternal wrath had opened upon them and buried them forever in its deluges. God will indeed if he please snatch sinners away from the wretched state in which they are by nature: but it is their duty to feel that they are under the strongest obligation to escape without his assistance and to make efforts just as if they were able and *God peradventure will give them repentance*.

6. Finally some will not escape from Sodom to the mountain of safety although God has taken hold of them and is leading them towards it: because they are not yet quite ready to follow him. They are awakened by his Spirit and are alarmed at their condition and reason and conscience and the bible all urge them forward at the present moment. And if God will only wait upon them a little longer even if it be only a few days (hours) they fancy they shall joyfully flee to the Saviour. But some more preparation is necessary - they must get a deeper sense of their wickedness - they must pray more and make their moral characters a little better before the Saviour will be receive them although he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. With such idle pretenses as these many a sinner has justified himself in resisting the Spirit of God until that Spirit - wearied out and insulted - has let go his hold on the heart and conscience and left the man to sink back into the mire of Sodom to wait his burning doom.

My hearers where are we located - on the mountain of safety - or on the plain or in the city of destruction? To all those yet lingering on the plain or who are sunk into the filth of spiritual Sodom itself - I can only say that my warning is delivered. They may disbelieve it - and neglect to listen to it. But they cannot keep back the impending storm. Already I see the dark clouds gathering - I hear the wind and the distant thunder roaring. As God is true the time is near when all the collected stores of his wrath will be belched forth in an overwhelming and eternal stream upon a wicked world. Do I seem to you as one that mocketh? So did Lot to the Sodomites - but that very day - as bright and beautiful at its commencement as any other day - the fire and the brimstone descended and buried them all. And thus suddenly and unexpectedly will the final storm break over the sinner's head. Oh then with a louder voice and more earnest entreaty I cry once more in your ears - *Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain*, etc.

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[A single sheet inserted at the third page of the sermon is transcribed below.]

Among such leaders you see many subordinate characters who still try to retain some decency and respectability before men: but whose secret deeds are too foul for description. Go at midnight to yonder close curtained and shuttered chamber or more frequently it is a cellar and by a mesmeric inspection

you will see where the gambler the sot the thief the liar the adulterer the glutton offer up themselves in sacrifice to Moloch. There the card table invites the conman - the wine when it is red has irresistible charms - the bacchanalian and libidinous song exhilarate and the oath rolls around the board in defiance of the Almighty. There many a youth is offering up himself body and soul on the altar of sensuality at the very hour when his parents are engaged in agonizing prayer in his behalf and temporal and eternal hopes are viley cast away and souls prepared for the pit of final destruction. Oh how dense is the population of spiritual Sodom! How fiercely will the final storm of fire and brimstone rage where such fruit is prepared.

Delivered

At Conway May 1 1825

At Amherst West Parish April 10 1831

At Amherst College March 1837

At Amherst College May 1841

At Amherst South Parish April 1838

At Hatfield January 1862

At Amherst College February 1852

## Sermon 513 Exposition of Romans XII Chapter

[Exposition of Romans Ch. 12, 1825 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 5]

The practical application of a discourse is of the greatest importance. For of what great consequence is it if we assent to the doctrines a man delivers if they have no influence on our hearts - if they are suffered to lie as useless speculations in our heads without ever descending to warm our hearts? The apostles rarely defend and illustrate doctrines without pointing out their application to practice. Indeed no doctrine is of any service any farther than it affects the conduct. Those grand truths - forming the essence of the Gospel - which Paul presents us in the eleven first chapters of this epistle constitute a firm foundation on which to build a system of practical inferences. Accordingly Paul devotes the residue of the epistle to this object. And the chapter under consideration contains a condensed and most valuable collection of practical truths which are capable of application in the every day business of life and are calculated to have a most happy influence upon our present and eternal welfare. There is another thing that greatly recommends these truths: they are so easily apprehended that the weakest faculties may understand them and the poorest memory retain them while the strongest mind will find in them a fund (or fount?) of useful meditation. I do not undertake the exposition of this chapter so much because it has many difficulties to unravel or hidden beauties to reveal. But rather to ask you my hearers to pause upon the several passages and try to impress them upon your heart and enquire whether you have heretofore put them in practice and to give you time to resolve that they shall hereafter regulate your lives. The apostle begins by addressing us not in the language of stern commands but by entreaty to show of what vast importance he regarded the subject.

### Verse 1.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Entire consecration of soul and body to the service of man of God.

It must be a holy sacrifice or not acceptable.

It is reasonable. 1. An account of creation 2. Redemption 3. Sanctification

### Verse 2.

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

The course of this world is opposed to the will of God - Selfishness is the mainspring – but he requires benevolence.

The Christian is a new creature.

*That will of God* - means his will as respects all the perceptive part of Christianity - they only can thoroughly know it who endeavor to practice it.

If these are the words of God then many professing Christians may say they are not Christ's disciples.

#### Verse 3.

*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

A strong caution against pride that easily besetting sin - that secret learned which is always ready to excite a ferment in the soul.

How shall we know whether we are proud? Or have spiritual pride?

1. More disposed to censure our brethren than to condemn ourselves.
2. Do Christians regard us as influenced by spiritual pride?
3. Do the world think us spiritually proud?

God has given to men different measures of faith. This is to be taken into consideration in judging ourselves and others.

#### Verses 4 and 5.

*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:  
So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

Unity of the Church clearly taught.

Also that different Christians have different gifts are excel in particular duties.

Neglecting this sentiment has been the cause of much uncharitableness among brethren.

Refer to the figure of the different members of a man (I Corinthians 12:14-27)

## Verses 6 - 8.

*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

All our gifts are here referred to the grace of God.

*Ministry* - refers not to pastors but to deacons distributing charities or attending to any other service.

*Teacheth* – refers to those who taught the young the first principles of the gospel

*Exhorteth* refers probably to ministers

*Ruleth or presideth* - one who was called to preside in public bodies.

The meaning is that every man should endeavour to ascertain the peculiar sphere in which God intended him to move and that he should confine himself to that and not obtrude himself into places for which he is not qualified - neither despising those beneath him nor envying those above him.

## Verse 9.

*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

Forms of society perhaps opposed to this.

The resolute and unbending in your Christian course.

## Verse 10.

*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;  
in honour preferring one another;*

Original expressions of motherly love very strong -

Think better of your brethren than of yourself and anticipate them in every proper act of respect and honour.

## Verse 11.

*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;*

This is the right kind of industry - no matter how eager a man is to get property if at the same time he is fervent in spirit serving the Lord.

What is the effect of worldly pursuits upon us?

## Verse 12.

*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*

Dejection of Spirit prevents the Christian from performing his duty as he ought. But to be animated by the hope of glory will operate as a powerful stimulant in doing the will of God - and make us patient in tribulation.

But we will be vain without frequency and fervency in prayer.

## Verse 13.

*Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*

*If any man seeth his brother have need, etc.*

## Verse 14.

*Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*

How contrary this maxim to the practice of the world! Must I add of professing Christians also?

## Verse 15.

*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*



This tender sympathy cannot exist without brotherly love - how much more frequent for men to envy those who are prospered than to rejoice with them?

Verse 16.

*Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things,  
but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

Be united in affection and the same mind.

Seek not elevated stations or connexions - but condescend to the poor and obscure - for among such the Gospel will chiefly prevail.

Verse 17.

*Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

*Provide things honest.* Make it manifest by your integrity uprightness and fidelity that you act honorably and kindly towards all.

Verse 18.

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

As far as is consistent with duty and conscience

Verse 19.

*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath:  
for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Is it not a striking instance of human presumption that men should so frequently have usurped this prerogative of Jehovah! Even the Christian needs to be cautioned against the desire of revenge so deeply rooted in the human heart.

## Verse 20.

*Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

Philosophers have talked about this principle but Christians only have practiced it.

The way to subdue an enemy is to do him good.

## Verse 21.

*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Be not tempted however great the provocation to return evil for evil but conquer your enemy by doing him good.

## Remarks

1. What an interesting and lovely character are the precepts of this chapter calculated to form!

Let us be emulous to assume that character.

2. But it is only a cordial reception of the Gospel that can produce this amiable character.

Philosophers and moralists have attempted it in vain.

Let us then put our hearts to the hour of the gospel and be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Delivered

At Conway August 1825

## Sermon 514 [Importance of Christians Gathering]

[Hebrews 10:25, 1825 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 5]

Hebrews 10:25

*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.*

*[This sermon is mainly about the importance of attending weekday prayer meetings; it has been amended and altered repeatedly. Hitchcock seems to be concerned that poor attendance at these meetings is an indicator of lack of interest in religion in his parish.]*

It ought never to be forgotten in reading the apostolic epistles that they were written to those who on account of their principles were regarded as fit objects of persecution and vengeance. And believers knew such would be their lot when they first embraced the religion of Christ. It is no wonder then that we because we know human nature to be that they should sometimes have shrunk from the appalling cross they had daily to sustain. Such was the severity of the persecutions raised against them that they could not safely meet together for social worship. Thus to meet was regarded as sufficient evidence of their attachment to the hated Nazarene and this was enough to bring them to the stake. It is not strange then that some should have absented themselves from the meetings of their brethren lest it should cost them their lives. And they might reason very plausibly to show it was not their duty to run so great a risk. Would their kind and merciful Father in heaven require them to put their lives in jeopardy when he could as easily bestow his grace upon them in private as in social worship? But Paul in the text reproves those who shrunk from attendance upon the worshipping assemblies through fear of them that could only kill the body. He did not consider a sufficient excuse for them to neglect social worship merely because their lives were exposed: for God had more important objects to accomplish by those meetings than to preserve the lives of his children. And if so great peril in apostolic times did not justify an absence from social worship what shall we say concerning the multitudes in later times who through mere slothfulness or love of the world without the exposure of a single hair of their heads forsake the assembly of themselves together!

But to what particular occasion of social worship does this text refer? Unquestionably to the sabbath because we know that the early Christians were accustomed to convene upon that day. But does it refer to no other season? It doubtless includes all those seasons in which the early disciples were wont to meet for worship. There is no reason for limiting the direction to the sabbath if the disciples were in the habit of holding meetings upon other days: and that they were, the scriptures abundantly testify. That it is the duty of men not to forsake the assembling of themselves together on the sabbath few who believe the bible will deny and therefore there is no need to spend time in proving and applying the text so far as the sabbath is concerned. But very many consider religious meetings during the week as a mere human invention and that there is no command or example impressing any obligation on us for such meetings in the bible. Hence multitudes and even some professing Christians neglect conferences and prayer meetings and weekly lectures without ever feeling that they do wrong. It may be well therefore to spend a few moments in the examination of this subject in enquiring whether there is anything in the bible recommending or commanding such meetings or whether they are the invention of later ages and attendance upon them is to be considered a matter of mere expediency. If they are a thing of mere

expediency it does not follow that they are contrary to the will of God since this may be one of those things that are left untouched in the bible to be regulated according to circumstances. But I maintained that meetings for religious purposes during the week have a sanction of scripture examples as well as positive precepts. May I assert that there is substantially the same evidence from scripture in favor of religious meetings during the week as there is in the favour of them upon the Christian sabbath. To prove and enforce this assertion will be my object in this discourse.

In order to judge whether this assertion is true it will be necessary as a preliminary step to enquire what evidence we have that Christians in the days of the apostles were in the habit of meeting together on the sabbath for the worship of God? There is certainly no where to be found in the bible an expressed command for the observance of this day unless it be the text and this it is obvious does not apply to the sabbath any more than to the other days in which religious meetings might be held. But a large number of cases are mentioned in which the primitive disciples are related to have assembled on the first day of the week for the worship of God. It was on that day when Christ met his disciples after his resurrection - and again the first day of the week following a second time. The day of Pentecost when the disciples were with one accord in one place was the first day of the week. On that day the scriptures assure us the disciples were wont to meet to break bread or celebrate the Lord's supper and on one such occasion Paul preached until midnight. In Revelation John tells us he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and ecclesiastical history informs us that the Lord's day was the Christian sabbath. It is on such evidence as this only that we rely to prove that the apostles observed the first instead of the seventh day of the week as the sabbath. True the fourth commandment requiring the observance of the sabbath is the binding upon Christians: but the sabbath was originally observed on the last instead of the first day of the week and the principal evidence of this change in this in the day consists of the example of the apostles already referred to. And this example I conceive has all the force of a positive precept. Because the apostles never would have dared to make an alteration in an institution so holy and important as the sabbath had they not been guided by inspiration. Let us now see whether there is not the same kind of evidence of religious meetings during the week as are agreeable to the divine will as in regard to the first day of the week.

I shall begin with the saints who lived before the coming of Christ under the Jewish dispensation. And what was their practice in regard to occasional religious meetings? *Come and hear all ye that fear God,* says the psalmist, *and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.* He here calls upon believing friends to assemble together that he might relate to them the dealings of God towards him: and in every age of the church such meetings (called experience meetings) have not been uncommon. But in Malachi we have a more decided testimony to the frequency with which holy men under the Jewish dispensation were accustomed to meet for social worship. *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith he the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.* From this passage we not only learned that the saints of old were accustomed frequently to enkindle the flames of love in their hearts by mutual conference and social prayer but we learn also in what light God regards such meetings. It was a time of general declension of religion in Judea when the great majority were living far from God and he seems to regarded as a strong proof of piety that any at such a time should speak often one to another on the subject of religion. And if God would reward those who attended these conference meetings in former times no reason can be given why he does not look as favorably upon those in every age to follow their example.

Let us now enquire what was the practice of apostles martyrs and other holy men in the days of our

Saviour and immediately following. And the first thing we find on the subject that is explicit is the Saviour's promise to his disciples, *where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them*. This may and does apply to meetings on the sabbath as well as on other days: but by no rule of interpretation can it be limited to the Sabbath. Indeed the mode of expression seems rather descriptive of a conference or a prayer meeting during the week than a public assembly on the sabbath. For alas such meetings are often very well described by saying, *two or three are met together*: whereas a more full attendance is usually given to sabbath exercises. What other warrant than do we need for weekday (conferences and prayer) meetings than this promise of the Saviour. For he would not bless what he did not approve. He would not approve what he did not recommend. And when a Christian knows Christ approves and recommends and blesses any particular course of conduct it has all the force of a positive command and he will go forward to attempt its performance. And so long as this explicit promise of Christ remains on record he who conscientiously and punctually joins in all those extra religious meetings he can do consistently with other duties may be sure he is obeying his Saviour's command and will receive his Saviour's blessing. But how that Christian who neglects these meetings through sloth or worldliness can meet the the author of this promise at the judgment day I am unable to conceive.

After the Saviour's ascension to glory we all know the influence of his Spirit were mostly remarkably shed down upon Jerusalem on that memorable sabbath usually called the day of Pentecost. The result was that the graces of the disciples were manifestly improved and lightened and the historian says, *that they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*. Hence we perceive not only a daily bit an almost uninterrupted succession of meetings and at such a season of peculiar attention no doubt such a frequency of religious exercises was proper as it is in similar seasons in every age – or God would not have bestowed his blessing as we find he did do by adding daily to the church such as should be saved and producing harmony and love. In another instance also when the apostles were liberated from prison by an angel of the Lord and were commanded by the Jewish rulers not to preach said of them that *daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ*. When Herod had thrown Peter into prison we find *prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him*: and it was while *many were gathered together praying* that the apostle was miraculously released. So wonderfully did God bless an evening prayer meeting: for this happened in the night time.

In Paul's epistles are some directions to Christians that imply the practice of vocational meetings. To the Colossians he says, *let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*. To this maybe added the text and context, *Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching*. After the examples that have been produced can any one doubt but the precept in the text extends to occasional weekly meetings as well as to those on the sabbath?

Have I not shown then my hearers that the scriptural evidence in favor of such meetings is substantially the same as that of public worship on the sabbath viz. the example of approbation of holy men of the early times especially of Christ and his apostles? But Christians usually regard the evidence in favour of public worship on the sabbath as amounting to a command. Why then ought they not to consider themselves as commanded to attend conferences and prayer meetings - for certainly these two kinds of occasional meetings were held by the primitive disciples and were approved of by Christ and a blessing

is promised to such as contentiously attend them? Why admit apostolic example and the approbation of Christ to be binding in case of the sabbath and deny their authority in the case of weekdays and extra meetings? I pretend not to say whether the evidence be greater in regard to the sabbath than in regard to occasional meetings - this is of little consequence provided it be sufficient to show that God approves and wills the latter. For it is not our business to enquire how many times God has commanded a thing - but whether he has commanded it at all.

Does anyone enquire how he shall obey such a command even if he admits we are directed to attend occasional extra meetings when we are not told how often to attend them? And does not this omission show that we are not under obligation to attend upon them at all since God never leaves his commands imperfect. But will anyone doubt that God has commanded secret prayer? Surely not: yet we are nowhere told how often we must pray in secret. This is left to ourselves to regulate according to our time and strength. And just so are we left to our own discretion to determine how often we ought to join the social prayer meetings and conference remembering however that we ought to devote as much time to them as is consistent with other duties.

But some one says he cannot afford the time to attend to them at all. His worldly business is (studies are) so pressing (and his necessary cares so great) that he feels justified in neglecting them altogether. The reason probably is that he loves the world so ardently that he has multiplied worldly business upon himself beyond all necessity and beyond all reason. It is possible indeed that in some very rare instances a man may be prevented for a long season from uniting with his brethren during the week in the worship of God: but in general it is idle to say that we cannot find one or two hours during the whole week for serving God in this way of his appointment. Who does not find ten times longer period to spend in worldly visits or in useless conversation or in more idleness? To devote an hour or two each week in the social worship does not usually interfere with worldly business at all but rather makes a man more industrious and successful if such a meeting has a proper effect upon him.

But it is said we are commanded to labour six days and do all our work: and therefore we have no right to neglect our customary worldly business to attend religious meetings during that period. If this be really the meaning of the fourth commandment then we have no right except on the sabbath to read the bible or to attend to secret devotions - no right to be present at a funeral nor join in a social visit since these would be as great a violation of the commandment as an attendance upon religious meetings. But this objection is too ridiculous to be formally refuted though formally argued by men of distinction.

Other objections are raised against religious meetings during the week: as that they tend to produce enthusiasm - to cherish spiritual pride and to make divisions in society and the like. But after all the grand objections I fear that difficulty lies in a want of relish among men for prayer and religious conversation. Take away from a man disrelish for these things and you take away all his objections against the conference and the prayer meetings.

I close with a few inferences.

1. The subject shows us the reason why those professing Christians who neglect the weekday religious meetings usually exhibit so little of the power of religion in their lives. If this be not a fact then am I greatly mistaken. If we find a man whose daily walk shows his heart to be warmly engaged in religion whoever hear him objecting to such meetings is it not well known that such when duty permits frequent them? Is it known also that those who unnecessarily neglect such meetings - I did not say in every

instance but generally manifest a great degree of worldliness and a low state of religious feeling - a state of lukewarmness which is offensive to God? And this subject shows us why they are in such a state. It is because they neglect one of the means of growing in grace which Christ approves and blesses and commands us to observe and which holy men of old were diligent to improve. Leanness is sent into their souls because they *forsake the assembling of themselves together*. We might expect therefore that the leanness would be sent into their souls and that they would give little evidence of religion.

2. This subject shows us why religious meetings have been the means of conversion of so many souls and the edification of so many believers. Many have a prejudice against such meetings because they have sometimes been instrumental in promoting spiritual pride and enthusiasm. And it is true they have sometimes been abused. Some can see no value in a conference or prayer meeting unless there is something extravagant or singular: some will look upon any meeting as unprofitable in which they did not make a conspicuous figure; and some estimate the excellence of a prayer meeting just as the heathen do their services according to the number or length of the prayers. But aside from all this abuse of these things evening religious meetings have been the place where a great multitude of souls have been and are converted many who have been eminent for piety – many who have been faithful ministers and missionaries have received their first impressions in a little praying circle which worldly men have despised and ridiculed. And the reason God has so remarkably blessed these meetings is that they are agreeable to his will and of his appointment as one of the means by which he converts souls. For were these meetings contrary to God's will he would not add his blessing to them and thereby sanction them. We must acknowledge then that God approves of such educational meetings or that he blesses what is contrary to his will.

*[Asterisk; a third head is inserted here.]*

Thirdly we learn from the subject that those professors of religion who find themselves indisposed to attend upon weekday religious meetings and who excuse themselves from such meetings as often as they possibly can with any show of reason such persons have great cause to fear that they are either destitute of religion or at least in such a state of backsliding that they ought not to indulge hope of heaven. Their disrelish of the prayer meeting and evening lectures shows that they do not love what Christ approves and commands and what eminence saints in every age have delighted in. If they should find a similar disrelish for the services of the sabbath it would probably alarm them: but I apprehend that their feelings respecting religious meetings during the week afford a better test of the state of their hearts: for there is a great deal more to attract and gratify the unsanctified feelings in public worship on the sabbath than in the retired prayer meeting; and therefore it requires more real love of religion to make the latter pleasant. Hence the false professor abandons the latter while he takes a sort of complacency in the former.

4. This subject shows us one of the causes why religion declines in the church. It is because they forsake the assembling of themselves together and thus neglect a divine institution. Point me to the place where no conferences or prayer meetings or weekly meetings break in upon the busy time of weekday worldliness from one sabbath to another and I will point you to a church that has a name to live while they are dead. Let the gospel be preached in such a place on the sabbath: yet feeble will be its power over a heart that has been devoted for six days uninterruptedly to the influence of the world. The Christian professor who habitually and unnecessarily neglects conferences and prayer meetings has no reason to expect and generally does not receive much comfort or edification on the sabbath.

*[The next paragraph which is crossed out in pencil is transcribed below.]*

Finally the subject teaches us that the church and people who neglect conferences and prayer meetings may expect the judgment of God upon them. If a church should wish lukewarmness and indifference to prevail among its members - if they should wish to prepare the way most effectually for the inroads of error - if they should wish to see the impenitent sleep on in unconcern they could not take a more effectual course than to neglect such meetings. If they be of divine appointment such we should expect would be the consequence of their neglect and such melancholy facts show us that it is the effect.

If these things be so my brethren and then do I feel constrained to lift a warning voice to day on this subject in this sanctuary. For have I not reason to fear that the judgments I have described are already impending over us? Let the empty conference room and prayer meetings answer. I urge your attention to the subject and my brethren and not merely on the ground of expediency; but I claim for these weekdays occasional meetings a divine appointment and therefore these are not to be neglected but at our peril. The discouragement I feel on meeting so few where prayer is wont to be made arises not so much from personal disappointment as from a solemn belief that unless Christians awake to this subject the judgment is wont to inflict on those who neglect his institutions will fall upon us and our children with an overwhelming weight.

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*[This seems to be the end of the original sermon. Attached are several pages of text that may represent alternate endings or inserts. The very last, a page fragment, seems to refer particularly to students who find no time for prayer meetings due to their studies.]*

Finally if irreligious men hope for conversion let them not forsake the assemblage of themselves together where prayer is most to be made on the weekday conference or prayer meetings any more than on the sabbath. If those whose hearts have been renewed cannot preserve religion in exercise by the worship of the sabbath alone but need to have their minds frequently diverted from the absorbing interests of this world during the week those surely in whose hearts no spark of spiritual life has ever been kindled need the help of social weekday meetings to resist the omnipotent power of the world. And whatever views we entertain of divine sovereignty in the conversion of men we must admit that it is those men who are attending upon the appointed means of grace that are converted and those who neglect them are lost. I would urge the unconverted therefore to attend upon these occasional Christian assemblies during the week for the same reason that I would urge them to come to the house of God upon the sabbath: viz. because God commands their attendance because it is a means of conversion and salvation and because to neglect them is to run the risk of losing the soul. And no doubt...[bottom of page unreadable]...only to hear them echo back from the walls of their eternal prison.

(Bottom of last page) that while many a soul in heaven is recollecting these reasons with grateful emotion and thrilling interest others who on earth neglected them are pouring out their unavailing regrets in perdition that these places where they might have found pardon and peace are forever beyond their reach.

But I will not enlarge: for probably the delusion under which such a man acts is too deep to be broken by my feeble voice and and that nothing but the terrible light of the dying hour or...I know that such a person will persuade himself that his neglect of the weekday religious meeting results from the presence of more important duties and that he neglects them because he feels if he could learn nothing



new than our because he thinks he can spend the time more profitably in some other place. But the true reason is probably because he has no real love for experimental religion and because his conscience is so unsensible that it does not urge him to the conference or the prayer meeting even as a matter of duty? And is not the chief reason why he attends occasionally that he may not incur the suspicion and reproof of his brethren? Is it not alarming that such a man does not see the true reason of this neglect? Is it not strange that he does not see within his heart aversion to all that is actually in religion. Or that he would so strongly disrelishes prayer and religious conversation on earth should hope to be admitted to heaven? He may indeed for a little time so smother conscience that her voice shall not be heard. But when he lies upon the bed of death her tongue will be unloosed and her terrible rebukes will ring like seven thunders through all the chambers of the soul in thus professing Christian will probably begin to see that he has never loved God and probably never will. New page and this is

And yet how common is it for men who profess to believe in the reality of vital piety and that they are destitute of it and that they can never hope to attain it without using the means of grace how common for such men to avoid all religious meetings during the week as if they had no concern with them! And they think it is sufficient apology for such neglect to say that the meetings are usually too dull to interest them that they should certainly be present were they sure of an eloquent sermon or address. But do you suppose the criminal condemned in an earthly court would neglect to go to the place where the judge was accustomed to bestow pardons because the offer might not be made in an eloquent manner. Now the fact is that every unconverted man is condemned already by the court of heaven because he had not believed on the only begotten Son of God: and the evening religious meeting is the place where God is always present to bestow pardon upon all who seek it in a proper manner. Independent men know perfectly well that he has bestowed pardon upon thousands at just such meetings and under just such preachings as they neglect and despise. And the truth is that they do not wish for pardons in the way that God has appointed. He wishes to bestow it upon them humbled and crying for mercy in the prayer meeting. But like Naiman they think he will surely do something great and stick his hand over the place and restore the leper. But he will not do it. He will never do it until they are convinced of their ruined and condemned state and feel their chains be so heavy in their servitude and sin and Satan to be so degrading that they are willing to go anywhere and do anything for deliverance. He had who has such feelings will need no human eloquence to draw him to the prayer meeting and evening lecture. And I doubt not that a proper effect upon him. I am quite satisfied from long observation that this is eminently true in the case of the student. He gives himself with such intensity to study that he cannot devote an hour or two during the whole week for social worship is not only disobeying God but violating the laws of hygiene and will most likely soon break down and fail utterly in the very object for which he sacrifices so much of his soul's welfare. No wise instructor will ever require such unlimited study and no student can give it without inflicting injury to both body and soul.

Delivered

At Conway August 1825

At Amherst College June 1828

At Amherst College November 1844

At Amherst College August 1832

At Amherst College October 1835

At Amherst College February 1840

At Amherst West Parish October 1835

At Amherst South Parish August 1840

At Amherst College October 1846

At Amherst College October 1859

## Sermon 515 [Awakening of Sinners]

[Acts 2:37, 1825 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 6]

Acts 2:37

*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?*

*[This sermon seems to have three or four alternative endings and an insert that might have been for the benefit of students at Amherst College.]*

We have here an account of a body of men in a state of extreme anxiety and alarm. And it is natural to enquire who they were? and what was the occasion of their distress? They were Jews and many of them no doubt were the very persons who only fifty days before had been engaged in destroying Christ - joining in the savage cry, *crucify him - crucify him*. But being assembled on the first day of the week that is on the Christian Sabbath the apostle Peter preached to them and in a very plain and faithful manner told them of their guilt in crucifying Christ (Messiah). And then strange to tell instead of being excited to rage and madness against him they cried out broken hearted and greatly alarmed, *men and brethren what shall we do?* Only a short time afterward the holy Stephen preached to the Jews in Jerusalem and sermon very similar to that of Peter on this occasion. But instead of being alarmed at their danger and confessing their guilt, they gnashed upon him with their teeth and stoned him to death and commenced a violent persecution against all the followers of Jesus so that they were all scattered abroad. No why was it that while the discourse of Christ and Stephen brought on the only persecution and death - a single sentence of Peter induced three thousand souls to confess their guilt and to be baptized into a profession of the Gospel? It cannot be accounted for by the ordinary operation of moral cause. But Peter explained the origin of the difference when he quoted from the prophet Joel - *And it shall come to pass in the last days saith God I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh*. It was then because the Spirit accompanied Peter's addresses in a remarkable manner that such remarkable effects followed. This reasoning would not have convinced the Jews of their guilt however clear it might have been unless it had been applied by that Spirit whose office it is *to convince of Sin of righteousness and of judgment to come*. And whenever and wherever one sinner is awakened to a sense of his danger while others remain in stupidity the only adequate reason for the difference is that the Spirit has opened the eyes of the one and not opened the eyes of the others. A person who is thus awakened to rest to see his guilt and his danger is commonly said to be under conviction: and it is always a state of anxiety and often extreme distress. It may be profitable to pause a few moments in pointing out what it is that produces so much alarm - or in other words showing the principal causes of the distress of the awakened sinner.

And secondly it alarms and distresses him to find out that his heart and life are so much worse than he had supposed.

There is no surer mark of conviction than this. While men are living in a state of security they think but little about their sinfulness: and although they see great depravity in the world around them yet their own hearts and lives seem free from any gross wickedness and therefore they conclude that the same spirit or disposition does not exist there as is manifested in many others. Or if they sometimes

endeavour to realize that they are as corrupt as the bible declares they look chiefly to their external conduct and make but small account of the sins of their hearts. But as soon as they find that the law of life God reaches as well their secret thoughts and desires as the external conduct and that a deed is regarded as committed in the eye of God when it is only conceived and desired in the heart that it is that they find a thousand aggravated sins before unthought of rushing upon their remembrance and with Job they exclaim, *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* They now find that they have neglected the first great commandment to love the Lord God with their whole heart and that the advanced neglect constitutes one of the blackest crimes of which rational beings can be guilty. We have prostituted the noble power he is given to the service of the world of Satan: they have made no grateful return for his unnumbered mercies – they have resisted his warnings and exhortations; and his world and his sabbaths and his preached gospel have served only to harden them in sin. Though God has been doing good to them all their days they have done not one deed to his glory. Though the Redeemer has laid down his life for them they have not even given him a place in their affections. And worst of all they now perceive that not to be for Christ is to be against him and that they have in fact lent the whole of their influence in opposition to religion and have virtually been leagued with the enemies of God throughout the universe. They now find that in thought if not in fact they have violated every one of the ten commandments and are exposed to the awful penalty annexed. (See second and last page of the cover).

*[Several notes and additional paragraphs attached to the cover of the sermon have been transcribed at the end.]*

In the third place another source of alarm to the awaken sinner is that he knows if he should die in his present state he must suffer everlasting misery.

While unawakened the sinner although he may not formally deny the doctrine of future punishment without end yet feels as if he did not deserve a doom so awful: and that it would be cruel in God to inflict interminable agony upon one who though sometimes deviating from duty in general followed the dictates of reason and scripture. And he fancies that even if eternal torment should await some incorrigible offenders yet he shall somehow or other escape. But it is one part of the works of the Spirit to convince of judgment. Indeed he who is convinced of sin never hesitates to admit the righteousness of that tremendous sentence the bible passes upon sinners. He feels that whatever others deserve his sins justly deserve a punishment in intensity too great for human language to measure only by eternity. And when he sets down seriously to think of the terrific figures under which that punishment is set forth in the bible when he thinks about his own soul - trodden down in the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of of Almighty God - whether sweltering in a lake of fire and brimstone - food for the undying worm and the unquenchable fire - groping in blackness of darkness forever – a companion of the devil and his angels - Oh the terrible prospect fills his soul with unspeakable horror. He knows that life is uncertain - he knows that his submission is uncertain and therefore he feels himself exposed every moment to drop into the pit that awful state from which there is no deliverance. The dreadful thought follows him wherever he goes and sometimes presses with such weight upon him as almost to drive him to delirium. Oh he cries how can I dwell with the devouring fire - how can I dwell with everlasting burnings?

And in all these fears there is my hearers no exaggeration: nay our liveliest conceptions of future woe are faint in comparison with the reality: in the sinner however alarmed who has not yielded his heart to the Redeemer is just as much exposed to death as he who is careless and serene. It is no wonder then that when aroused to a sense of the situation his soul should be *like the troubled sea when it cannot rest*

*whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

Am fourth cause of distress and alarm to the awakened sinner is the thought that notwithstanding his imminent danger he is in the hands of that God who has mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth. Oppressed with a sense of his extreme wickedness and exposure to eternal wrath the sinner feels earnestly desirous merely on selfish principles to comply with the terms of the gospel and knowing that love to God the Redeemer lie at the foundation of these conditions he strives to turn his affections towards these glorious effects. But so deep rooted is the love of sin within him so firmly fastened to the world is his heart that he said he finds it to be in vain to expect he shall ever accomplish his object without the assistance of the Holy spirit - although this necessity of a divine influence does not diminish in the least his obligation to love God supremely because it was his own voluntary sinfulness that incapacitated him. Thus is the sinner shown that he lies at the mercy of a sovereign God who can convert him if he pleads and who leave him to perish if he pleases. And did he love God he would rejoice to be in his hands and feel safe then and be willing to be disposed of to promote the divine glory. But the pride of his heart struggles against so humiliating a truth. He wishes to have the power in his own hands to love God when he pleases and not be dependant on another for assistance when he pleases - although when he became the servant of sin he voluntarily resigned that power and has no one to blame but himself and if God should have mercy on him it will be more than he deserves: and should God leave him to perish it will be no more than justice. But his heart struggles against these mortifying truths and he often quarrels with the sovereignty of God and feels it to be arbitrary and tyrannical for God to have mercy on one and not one another. And although he constantly finds that he must lie at the foot of sovereign mercy yet his efforts to escape from such a state seem greatly to increase his distress and alarm for he fears that he like thousands of others will finally be left and that his present anxiety is but the prelude of everlasting agony.

Fifthly the awakened sinner finds another source of alarm and distress in the fear that he has delayed repentance until it is too late.

These there is in the bible one solemn and alarming passage calculated to awaken this fear. *Because I have called, says God, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When you fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; where distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.* Now when the awakened sinner looks back upon his life he is made apprehensive that his case answers the description here given. How often has God called him by his word his providence and his ministers and yet he has refused! With what earnestness has he often been urged to flee from the wrath to come! How often has conscience called upon him to wake out of his delirious dream - and even the Spirit of God perhaps has once awakened him and urged him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But all this has been disregarded and resisted - he has shook off his serious impressions and resisted the Spirit and stifled the voice of conscience he feels that he has despised the reproof and set the course of Jehovah. And after so much resistance and perverseness how can God be merciful anymore! How can his patience and forbearance hold out longer! It may be that the accepted time the day of salvation is passed never to return. It may be that the fear of God is forever closed and the irrevocable sentinel gone forth from his life that this man shall never enter into his rest. For a long period did God speak him and encourage him by motives both tender and alarming to accept of salvation. How many sermons how many exhortations how many providences has he heard and felt unaffected. But now alas the harvest is past summer ended and he is not saved. He is left to become the eternal prey of an accusing conscience. Oh how terribly must such thoughts agitate

and overwhelm the bosom of this awakened sinner. And in fact there seems to be reason for such an one to fear that this is his melancholy lot. The only thing that can prove him not to be thus abandoned is submission to God. Until this charge be passed upon him he must feel the agonizing fear drinking up his spirit.

But sixthly the awaking sinner is or ought to be greatly alarmed because his guilt is increasing so fast while in a state of conviction. He ought to be alarmed I say: for it is a melancholy fact that he is not always so. Nay some while under convictions feel as if their anxiety laid God under a sort of obligation to have mercy upon them and that he looks upon them with much greater complacency than before. But how can God take any delight in a man until he is given him his heart: especially how can he take delight in the one whose heart is so obstinate that it still holds out in rebellion although convinced of its wickedness acknowledging its obligations and trembling at its extreme danger! It is a principle of the bible that, *to whom much is given of him will much be required*. How rapidly then is the guilt of that man increasing whose heart refuses to submit to God although urged to it by his fears by his conscience by his reason and by the Spirit of God! How dreadful is condemnation if resists all these motives to the end!

Finally the awakened sinner fears that he shall do this and resist the Spirit of God and that his present convictions will soon be lost.

He looks around him and sees many now as far from religion as the east is from the west - who were once as anxious for their souls as he is. Yet after a few months of extreme distress and alarm these persons came back again into the world and seemed to forget their danger and engaged in earthly pursuits with as much relish as ever and wholly neglected religious duties and live year after year without anxiety. And why should not the convicted sinner fear lest he should follow their example? His heart is as wicked and deceitful as theirs and his convictions are probably no deeper and his heart is as much disposed as theirs to throw off its anxiety and resist the Spirit of God. Perhaps too the awakened sinner recollects that he himself has been formally in a state similar to one he is now in: yet in some way or other he can hardly tell how his anxiety vanishes. What reason then has he to fear that he shall again resist the Spirit of God and return to the world desiring again to be in bondage to it there. And if he should refuse the call God now makes to him how fearful ought he to be lest it is the last one he will ever receive.

In view of this subject the first remark that forces itself upon our attention is how can the awakened sinner neglect a single hour to *repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. This was the direction the apostles always gave to those who enquired what they should do to be saved: and it is the proper answer to such in every succeeding age. Inefficacious as this remedy may appear it is in fact *the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation*. But the mystery is how a soul really convinced of its lost and dangerous situation can delay at all to comply with the appointed terms of salvation. Convinced as the man is that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked and that he stands in perishing need of a Saviour - satisfied that such a Saviour as he wants is provided and is always ready to receive him - impressed with the truth that eternal misery awaits him if he die without a belief on that Saviour - realizing that he is constantly exposed to death and fearing that he has already delayed repentance till there is no place for it though he seeks it earnestly with tears and that he is in great danger of resisting the Spirit of God with all these considerations pressing upon the awakened sinner with an almost irresistible power how is it that he should desire or dare or presume to continue a single hour in the neglect of submission to God and faith in Christ. He well knows that every succeeding hour will make the work more difficult and that he shall tempt God by delay to withhold the influences of his

Spirit instead of pouring them out in greater power: and yes he can live on day after day and week after week groaning under the weight of his conviction yet refusing the only and the easy remedy that can save him. Oh what desperate wickedness and madness exists in the human heart.

But when perhaps not one soul in this place is enquiring what he shall do to be saved - I fear my hearers the time of general stupidity it will be thought an unprofitable superfluous task to exhibit the danger and duties of the awakening sinner. I therefore remark secondly that in many respects the condition of the careless soul is more alarming and desperate than that of the convicted sinner. It is more alarming chiefly because he remains unalarmed. It does not make it any the less true that his heart and life are desperately wicked because he is ignorant of it and fancies himself to be rich and increased with goods and to need of nothing. You would look with great compassion upon a man who had a dangerous bodily malady upon him and yet could not be persuaded that he was sick at all. And so the fact that a deadly disease is preying upon the sinner's soul unperceived by him renders his condition more hopeless because he will not apply to the great physician who alone can cure him. And on the same principle the careless sinner is in greater danger - or rather his danger appears more dreadful than that of the convicted soul. Oh the wrath of God hangs over him and yet he perceives it not. He sports carelessly on the brink of the precipice - where fiery billows roll beneath he is likewise just as much in the hands of a sovereign God as the anxious soul and if God do not awaken him he must and will perish. Nor has he less reason to fear although he sees no fears on the subject that he has neglected repentance so long that it is now too late for him. Nay the state of stupidity in which he lives is strong presumptive evidence that he is already abandoned by the Spirit of God and given over to a reprobate mind a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction. In all these respects the fact that the careless sinner is willfully ignorant of his true character and condition serves greatly to increase the hopelessness and danger of that condition.

If such be the sinner's state then I enquire finally how it is possible the he should remain unalarmed concerning it! His ignorance of his condition is a willful ignorance for the bible and faithful ministers and pious friends tell him of his situation in unvarnished language and the mystery is how he can neglect soberly to enquire for himself when he be in so desperate a state! If he would but open his eyes and turn them back upon his past life he could not but see that the law of God condemns the whole of it. Would he look into his heart how could he avoid seeing there that carnal mind which is enmity with God. If he would look forward he must see that such a life and such a heart will inevitably carry him to perdition. But he will not see all this - he will not cast off from his eyes the film of pride and passion and worldliness. Yet the day is coming when the film will be removed - when he will be pricked in the heart and cry out *what shall I do?* But the days of mercy may then be past - and the Redeemer who now saves to the uttermost all that come to God by him may then be clothed in robes of judgment and answer to his cry not in the accents of Calvary but in the thunders of Sinai - depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

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*[This appears to be the end of the original sermon. Transcribed below are several pages inserted at the front of the sermon or within its pages.]*

(See page 5 at bottom)

Let us suppose a young man in the course of public education the son of devotedly pious parents to be awakened and to look back upon his past course. Some of the earliest recollections are the religious instructions and exhortations of his parents. He remembers that every morning and evening he was

summoned to the domestic altar where his father rarely failed to pray for his conversion. He recollects how early and how often his mother taught him to pray for a new heart. And he knows that probably not a day has passed since he was born in which those parents in their retirement have not earnestly prayed for his conversion. He knows the midnight hour has often intervened their strong crying and tears for their impenitent child. He has known for years that his conversion was the grand object for which his parents desired to live. And that no earthly event would fill them with more joy than to learn that their child had given his affections to God and that nothing could distress them more than his contrarious stupidity and unconcern. He knows also that all his best and most tired friends have had similar feelings and were similarly affected. Now this young man has loved his parents tenderly and would not for the world do anything to mar their happiness. Yet has he lived up to the present hour and a course of neglect of God and his duty that has filled those parents hearts with constant anguish. But strange to tell until this time when he was awakened and he had no consciousness of what he doing he has supposed himself kindly disposed especially towards his parents and friends. But now his cruel ingratitude the desperate obstinacy of his wicked heart in resisting so much love begins to manifest itself. He sees that he has got within his bosom a heart so deceitful so hostile to religion and to God that it has willingly sacrificed not only its own immortal happiness but the temporal happiness of its own dearest friends for the sake of continuing to follow the bent of its own desires. He never before suspected that he had such a heart and he feels now that he cannot live with it any longer. He feels like a man just awakened out of a deep sleep who finds himself surrounded by venomous serpents and scorpions.

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...to visit his people he would wish to see them with a name to live while they are dead: and while they profess a regard for cause act as if their own self interest were everything and Christ's cause and glory nothing? It O it is such that he spews out of his mouth. It is such that stands directly in the way of a revival. It is such that have taken their stand in the very gate of heaven and refusing themselves to enter are driving back all others who make the attempt. Dead Christians! Dead Christians how offensive are they to God! What strange objects in the sight of holy angels! How contemptible in view of devils!

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In concluding the subject let us look around us and within us my brethren to see whether any of the obstructions above pointed out to the coming of Christ among us are to be found in us as a church or as individuals. Is it fancy or do I really see the same Jehovah Jesus mounted upon the chariot of salvation and turning his course towards this church? Is it fancy or do I really hear the trumpet that sounds his approach? Is it fancy or do I already see the dawning of that light which attends him and hear the whirring of swords then an arrow from his bow such as subdued his enemies! No: it is not fancy: I hear the sound of his footsteps - he only lingers my brethren because we are not prepared for his coming. It is a critical moment with us. Let us then resolve without any delay, *to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight in the desert an highway for our God – Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people. Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way of the people! Cast up, cast up the highway! Gather out the stones.* Then shall joy and rejoicing be in our hearts and our habitations. Then show salvation come to this people – then shall the multitudes be converted. Seize then the precious and the critical moment and open the passage for the Saviour into our hearts to reign there forever and ever. And a new thrill of joy be felt and a louder burst of praise be heard in heaven.



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The men here spoken of who were thrown into a state of anxiety and were Jews , some of them probably the very individuals who only fifty days before had joined in the savage cry concerning Christ - *crucify him, crucify him.*

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In the first place it alarms and distresses him because he has found out that a new heart is necessary for him in order to be happy in heaven.

He may have given the people a false speculative assent to this doctrine in times past but he never really believed it. He has had to get an opinion of himself to suppose that he should finally be shut out of heaven: at least when he compared himself with many professors of religion he felt sure that he stood as good a chance of future happiness as they do. He was sure that he had more benevolence and regard to the welfare of others and less selfishness and worldliness than they. But now when awakened he finds that he judged himself by a wrong standard - by a comparison with others instead of the perfect law of God. Comparing his motives and conduct: by this standard he finds that barrenness is written over the whole of his life and that he must be lost unless a new heart be given him. And he finds it not so easy a matter to obtain a new heart. He begins to feel that this is God's work and although he is under obligation to love Him because he has all the necessary rational powers yet the current of his affections was for so long set in the opposite direction. And he finds it morally impossible to turn it back and after all his neglect and obstinacy whether God will do it is extremely doubtful. He finds himself in a most painful dilemma. The rock which he supposed himself standing upon he finds to be quicksand which is sliding from under him and the angry billows of Divine wrath began to go over him.

Delivered

At Deerfield December 7 1857

At Mount Holyoke Seminary January 1858

At Pelham January 31 1858

At Amherst North Parish May 1858

## Sermon 516 Exposition of Romans Sixth Chapter

[Exposition of Romans Ch. 6, 1825 Feb,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 2]

*[Justification by faith vs justification by works is discussed in paragraph 2.]*

The character of the objections raised against the doctrines of the Gospel has been the same in every age. Salvation by grace - or justification by faith without works through the mercy of God has always been among the number of important truths that have met with opposition. It has been said and still is said that if we are justified exclusively by faith through the righteousness of Christ then good works are not essential to the Christian character. In a former chapter of this epistle Paul has denied the correctness of such an inference: and in the commencement of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter he again recurs to it and gives it a formal answer. I have already dwelt extensively upon the subject and therefore shall not devote that attention to it at this time it would otherwise deserve.

Read the 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> verses.

Verses 1 – 2.

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?  
God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

Here we learn that the man who is saved by grace and justified by faith is dead to sin - that he hates it - that it no longer reigns over him and therefore he has no disposition to continue in sin that grace may abound. He would not continue to practice it even if it were safe to do it and the doctrine of grace justified him in it. The man who possesses a contrary feeling who is inclined to draw such an inference from this doctrine shows by that fact alone that he has never been justified by faith.

These verses lead us to see the folly of a certain horrid delusion that has sometimes existed even in gospel lands. Some parents have neglected to restrain and counsel their children from a belief that the most abandoned sinners are more likely to receive the grace of God than the externally moral. Where sin abounds say they grace superabounds. But with what abhorrence does Paul repel the abominable inference these persons draw from this declaration that the greatest sinners are the most likely receive the grace of God! Alas what detestable absurdity can be named which will not be adopted by the corrupt heart of man!

The apostle proceeds to illustrate the entire consecration of the Christian to his Redeemer by alluding to the rite of baptism.

Read 3rd and 4<sup>th</sup> verses.

Verses 3 – 4.

*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

By being baptized into Christ's death is meant the profession of such conformity to him as we lead the believer to die unto sin as Christ died - through the efficacy of his death. To be buried by baptism with him unto death means essentially the same thing - for as the death of Christ was an introduction to his glorious resurrection so the believer being buried in water by baptism manifested his death to sin and his rising to newness of life.

Many have supposed that when Paul represents believers to have been buried in baptism he makes it certain that immersion was the true and only mode in which baptism was administered in his day. I have no objection admitting that baptism in Judea in the days of the apostles was generally though not always administered by plunging the person into water: but I very much doubt whether this text contains any decisive proof on the subject. For suppose a person should maintain that the only proper mode of baptism was by pouring water upon the subject. What if he should bring forward in proof of this opinion the declaration of Christ to his disciples that they *should be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire?* - which we know was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when *the cloven tongues like as of fire descended and sat upon them and the Holy Ghost was poured out on them.* Would not these texts show just as conclusively that the proper mode of baptism was by affusion or pouring out water as the expression *buried by baptism* in the text under consideration does that immersion is the only proper mode? The truth is in both these instances allusion is made to baptism for the purpose of illustrating other truths - for explaining things spiritual by things sensible and therefore no certain conclusion can be drawn from them concerning the exact character of those objects that are chosen merely for illustration because it is not necessary according to the rules of good writing that the descriptions of those objects should be true in every respect.

In the following verses the sacred writer employs another simile to show how entire is the consecration of the justified believer to Christ and his deadness to sin.

Read 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> verses.

Verses 5 – 7.

*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

Christ is here represented as a plant sown in the earth which germinates and rises after a time and believers are described as *constituting a part of this plant*. Christ being the truth of them the branches - or perhaps like the moss and the mistletoe adhering to him and denying their nourishment from him. Thus both are exhibited as actuated by the same spirit. Like him therefore they must have an inherent hatred of sin which would leave them without any reference to consequences to resist sin and abstain from it: and hence it is a contradiction in terms to speak of a person who is justified freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus who takes advantage of the doctrine of grace to continue

in sin. For every person thus justified has a principle within him that renders sin a hateful object and leads him to break its fetters. This old man that is his original corrupt nature is *crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth he should not serve sin*. Or as more correctly translated, *he that is dead is justified from sin*. He does not mean as some have vainly imagined that the believer commits no sin but that he is not the servant of sin as appears perfectly obvious from the preceding verse: where he states it as the express object of crucifying the old man that he should not serve sin. And Paul proceeds in several subsequent verses to illustrate his meaning and to show that he means merely that the Christian is freed from the dominion of sin not from sin altogether.

Verse 8.

*Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

That is if we are conformed to Christ in his death and resurrection we obtain evidence we shall live and reign with him in glory.

Verses 9 and 10.

*Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

Since Christ knew no sin by his dying into sin once we must understand his dying as an atonement for sin. By his living unto God must be understood his exalted condition at the right hand of the Father thrones and dominions of power being made subject to him.

Read verses 11, 12 and 13.

Verses 11 – 13 [14].

*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

Here Paul assures Christians - all who are really such that sin shall not have dominion over them: and why because they are not under law but under grace. If they were left under legal covenant that is compelled to keep the whole law or lose heaven sin rule over them but the ornament of grace sufficient motives and sufficient promises of assistance to enable them to acquire and maintain the victory over sin and it is that promise alone that secures them from reverting to a state of bondage.

## Verse 15.

*What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

In the preceding verse the doctrine of the believer's final perseverance had been clearly impressed: and now Paul enquires whether Christians should sin because of the gracious promises of the covenant – and he repels the unjust inference some would draw from the doctrine with his decided abhorrence. Hypocrites and faults professors might indeed take advantage of this doctrine to practice sin supposing themselves safe. But the real Christian could not do it because hatred of sin was rooted in his soul. Paul next proceeds to give us a criterion by which to determine whether we are really the children of God. He makes the answer to this question turn upon the enquiry in whose service does the tenor of our conduct show us engaged – that out of the world or that of God?

Read verse 16.

## Verse 16.

*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

Of the Roman Christians the apostle thought favorably.

## Verses 17, 18 and 19.

*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

By *speaking after the manner of men because of the infirmity of their flesh*, Paul means that he had made use of illustrations drawn from the common usages of men in society because they could better understand these than abstract reasonings.

While the Romans were the servants of sin they did not serve God.

## Verse 20.

*For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

Though they might occasionally have performed acts of external service to Jehovah yet as they were servants of sin the service and glory of God opposite to that of sin did not influence them at all. And such is the case with all unrenewed man however differently they may think.

Finally Paul bids the Roman Christians to look back to their former condition before conversion and enquire what was the reward or fruit of their service to sin that thereby they might be deterred from returning to it.

Verses 21, 22 and 23.

*What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

A few inferences from this chapter will close the exposition.

And first from this chapter we derive two very important marks by which to determine whether we are really the children of God. Paul here presents us with one or two objections against the doctrine of salvation by grace or gratuitous justification. The chief objection is that the doctrine tends to licentiousness and affords an excuse and encouragement to sin. And it appears from the answer he has given to this objection that a man who is a real Christian will not make such an objection because such an one has a principal within him that leads him to hate sin on account of its nature and to feel that he is under new and more powerful motives than ever to keep the divine law because he is gratuitously justified by...

Delivered

At Conway February 1825

## Sermon 517 Exposition of the Seventh Chapter of Romans

[Exposition of Romans Ch. 7, 1825 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 2]

In the first chapter of Romans the sacred writer exhibits to us the desperate wickedness of the heathen world who had not a revelation. In the second chapter he proves that the Jews so far as their rational characters is concerned were no better than the heathens. In the third chapter he group all mankind together both Jew and Gentile and gives a view of their extreme depravity and then arrives with irresistible force to the conclusion he had been arriving at from the commencement that by deeds of law no flesh shall be justified before God. In the fourth chapter he shows that Abraham and the other Jewish patriarchs were justified by faith and not by works. In the fifth chapter he shows the blessed effect of gratuitous justification upon the subjects of it and illustrates the atonement and the derivation of a corrupt nature from Adam. In the sixth chapter he illustrates the powerful influence of this doctrine in rendering Christians holy and pure. In the seventh chapter whose examination I shall now attempt he illustrates the subject still farther showing in what sense Christians are free from the law and then he shows in a striking manner that they are sanctified only in part while in this world. In giving an exposition of any part of scripture it is quite important that we keep in mind a general and connected view of the aim and principal steps of the sacred writer otherwise we should lose half the force of the sentiments. Nothing is more common and yet nothing more unhappy than for Christians to make a wrong application of scripture texts bringing them forward to prove or illustrate things to which in their original connection they had not the remotest relation: and all because men do not attempt attend to the connection of the sacred writings. They had much rather form their opinions from their own reasonings and then search the scriptures for text to support them and then make their imaginations and reason bow to the superior authority of revelation.

It is the object of the apostles and the first part of the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter to illustrate the manner in which the Christian is freed from the law as a ground of justification. To understand him it is necessary to determine what sort of law he means in this place - whether the Jewish ceremonial or the moral law or law in general and after examination it seems to me he intends to comprehend the law of God whether written on the hearts of man or revealed or in other words all the moral law. That he means the moral law in the latter part of the chapter admits no doubt and that he gives no intimation anywhere of a change in the meaning of the term is equally evident. And besides his meaning will at least be equally forcible to suppose the same sort of law is meant throughout. In the first verse he says -

Verse 1.

*Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?*

Yet in certain cases a person was released from his obligation to a law that in general binds for life. To show this Paul quotes an instance sometimes occurring in the marriage relation.

## Verses 2, 3 and 4.

*For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

He does not mean by this illustration to convey the idea that the believer in Christ is freed from his obligation to obey the law of God - but only that he is released from it so far as justification is concerned and that by gratuitous justification new and more powerful obligations constrain him to obedience.

## Verses 5 and 6.

*For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

*When we were in the flesh* means in our unregenerate state. The *motions of sin* mean those unholy desires and affections which the law forbade in these producing unholy fruit brought upon all who were in that state the condemnation of death temporal and eternal from the law. But believers in Christ were delivered from the sentence of the law and brought into a new and better covenant even the covenant of grace and new and peculiar obligations were now imposed upon them to serve God with a new Spirit - to obey the Spirit of the law instead of its letter by a mere external or constrained service.

But an objection arises here. If those who remained under the law remained the unavoidable slaves of sin then the law and sin were in substance the same.

## Verse 7.

*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

Paul rejects with abhorrence such an absurd thought and says that in the contrary the law and sin were directly opposed and that the law tends to discover to us our sinfulness - because it shows us to be sinful in those respects in which we thought ourselves free from it. In particular he never should have



known it to be sinful to lust or covet or to desire a forbidden indulgence if the law had not forbidden it.

(Men prone to regard nothing but the action sinful.)

But the law not only disclosed to Paul the enormity of his sinfulness but it actually wrought upon his depraved heart as an additional incitement to sin.

Verse 8.

*But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.*

Who does not know that the moment an object that had remained for years untouched and undesired within his reach that object when forbidden became one which the heart hankered after? Nay who does not know that it was this very principle of our nature that would not suffer our first parents to remain contrite in Paradise until they had tasted of the forbidden fruit? Such was the effect of the law upon Paul. It brought in all manner of concupiscence or sinful desire. And before he had obtained the knowledge of that law sin within him was comparatively dead.

Paul proceeds still further with the former experience.

Verses 9 and 10.

*For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.*

He formerly had no just apprehension of the law of God or of his own want of conforming to it. He had been taught to regard it as consistent consisting chiefly in external observances or at the most in external decency or conduct. And then he was alive supposing himself safe and approved of God. But when the Spiritual nature that law was manifested to his conscience - when he saw it laying its grasp upon every part of man and binding every thought and motive and desire to its sway this at once laid open such hidden storms and fountains of iniquity within him as made him despair of salvation by his own performances - and led him to see that he lay under its condemning sentence which he could never escape from unless some other covenant but that of works were revealed. That very law which was destined originally to be the life of holy beings - constituting the ground of their continuance in life - Paul found to be no better to sinners like himself than a death warrant from which there could be no reprieve.

## Verses 11 and 12.

*For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.  
Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*

It was the deceitfulness of sin seducing Paul into aggravated transgressions and thus increasing his condemnation and not any defect in the law that occasioned his view while under the law so that *the law is holy etc.*

The objection stated in verse 7 here occurs with a little variation.

## Verse 13.

*Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*

The fault did not lie in the law that it could not save men: but in their own sinful dispositions. Thus was the odious nature and fatal malignity of sin manifested: for it slew Paul by that which in itself was good just as the intemperate man murders himself not by poison or the sword but by abusing the bounties of providence. This showed the horrid nature of sin and excited in the believer a hatred and detestation of it.

## Verse 14.

*For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

The law of God is not like human laws which relate only to external conduct: but it extends to the affections thoughts and desires and takes in the whole soul and thus is shown to be eminently spiritual. It approves of nothing but what originated from the purest of motives from a regard to the will and glory of God. And when Paul compared even his best services with such a standard he found that even yet advanced as he was in holiness he was comparatively carnal and a servant of sin.

The remainder of this chapter seems hardly to need any explicit explanation to render it intelligible. By the devoted Christian it can hardly be misapprehended: for it constitutes his almost daily lamentation over himself. And if any stumble at its literal sense I fear they need some other teaching than mine to remove their difficulties even the teaching of the Spirit of God showing them the hidden plagues of their hearts. Whoever has this knowledge possesses the true key for understanding the passage and indeed it is the best key ever discovered for unlocking the sense of all the N. Testament.

Read verses 15 to the end.

*For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

*I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

It is stated by historians that at one of the horrid punishments inflicted on criminals in ancient times was to tie them to a dead corpse leaving them to drag about the loathsome and intolerable burden until death ended their agonies. And when Paul says, *Oh wretched man, etc.*, he doubtless refers to this mode of punishment thus representing the Christian as dragging about with him in his heart a burthen no less filthy and oppressive to his soul than a putrid carcass is to the animal feelings. What a striking and yet what a just view does this give of the hatred the believer feels toward sin!

Is it not surprising my hearers that any should have imagined the latter.

Delivered

At Conway March 1825

## Sermon 518 [Giving Up Everything for Christ]

[Matthew 16:24, 1825 Aug,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 5]

Matthew 16:24

*Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me,  
let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

*[A sermon about self – denial and taking up the cross, it includes a vigorous critique of Catholicism.]*

On no subject perhaps are men in such danger of imbibing erroneous ideas as concerning the doctrines and duties of religion. For in the first place we are naturally ignorant of the subject and opposed to it and this ignorance and enmity are not entirely destroyed when we heartily and sincerely begin to seek the Lord. And then again men are naturally indolent and even the majority of Christians do not carefully and perseveringly study the bible but are often dependant upon accidents or tradition for their views of divine truth. And even those who endeavour to divest themselves as much as possible of sloth and prejudice and to search the scriptures daily for themselves are insensibly influenced by prevailing opinions or their own peculiar habits. Nor are these erroneous views of religion limited to its doctrines. Even the plainest precepts are liable to be misunderstood and misapplied. *The time shall come*, says Christ, *when he that killeth you shall think he doeth God service* and this declaration has been verified a thousand times At first the text seems very plain: we see immediately that Christ here calls upon us to subject all our powers and faculties to his service and to be ready to make the most painful sacrifices in his cause. But when men come to carry out this direction into practice they not infrequently make a strange and even ridiculous application of it. In explaining and illustrating this passage then it becomes necessary to point out some of the modes in which it is perverted or misapplied.

I shall in the first place point out certain supposed crosses and acts of self-denial that are not meant by the text.

And secondly show what it is to deny ourselves and to take up the cross.

1. Some have thought that the self-denial and cross mentioned in the text consisted chiefly in an utter exclusion from the world. Hence multitudes in former days and many at this day have shut themselves up in convents and nunneries with the professed design of reversing God without distraction. But the history of these recluses so far as it has been disclosed shows us the folly of the course they have adopted. It teaches us that solitude tends rather to inflame the corrupt passions of men and to destroy them and though it may prevent many acts of open wickedness it leaves the heart a seat of wickedness crowded with evil thoughts and imaginations and wanting the most diabolical acts. Hence the recluse is tempted to the commission of sins in secret and to double his iniquity by attempts to evade the public eye. Hence it is that the name of a monk has come to be associated inseparably with the most detestable hypocrisy and to be only a covering for the blackest of enormities. It was in those dark retreats of wickedness that the horrid Romish Inquisition spring up and there as in a hot bed have the seeds of impurity and cruelty been nourished till they have poured forth many a harvest of wretchedness and blood over the earth. There has the secret volcano been engendered which has

belched forth its flames all over the world withering and scorching and desolating in its course. In the history of monkish seclusion God has told us that the way to deny ourselves and take up the cross is not to shrink away from the dangers in our faith but resolutely to face them clothed in the whole armour of God. He has told us that the cross he would have us take up does not consist in bodily privations in corporeal flagellation – in pious pilgrimages to the holy city – nor in crusades – nor in starvation – nor in exposure needlessly to the winds and storms of heaven - nor in knight errantry nor in any of the other countless mummeries superstition and ignorance have imposed on the credulity of mankind though promulgated with all the authority of Popish infallibility.

2. Some can see the self-denial and cross described in the text to consist in singularity of appearance or conduct. They take it for granted that since the whole world lieth in wickedness everything irreligious men do must be wicked also not reflecting that in the vast majority of instances the sin consists not in the deed itself but in the motive to its performance so that while Christians perform the very same deeds as the sinner and to the eye of the world they appear alike they are in fact holy deeds to the Christian but unholy to the sinner because performed with altogether different motives. But some persons not making this distinction think they are doing wrong unless they act differently from others. Hence they must be clothed in a different costume no matter if equally impressive if it be only different. It is an important point also to refuse the common civilities and ceremonies of social life because this would be conformity to the world - and to affect a sort of magisterial authority to use a peculiar phraseology – measured and formal - interrupted by many a lengthened sigh and rendered solemn by an holy tone. A disgusting bluntness and vulgarity and total disregard of the feelings of others in addressing them are constituents of this sort of self-denial: as is also a disregard of all the distinctions in society and of age and rank. Such persons estimate their self-denial according to their impertinence and contempt of the customs and forms of society.

And here it may be remarked that it is usually the secret influence of pride or unholy ambition that leads persons to this sort of self-denial. The love of distinction is the most powerful passion of the human heart and it sometimes operates upon a religious man like a secret leaven. He perceives that he can be distinguished in no way but by being singular and pride persuades him it is his duty to be so. Many a person who has supposed himself bearing a heavy cross because he wore a particular dress and who pitied the pride of others whom he sought clad in rich attire has been vastly more influenced by pride in taking up this cross in another words has been more proud of his humility than others were of their gay clothing. Some persons will tell you it is the duty of all professors of religion to take a part in public meetings and to give exhortations however feeble their gifts or their natural abilities - and they will tell you that they are constrained to pray and exhort so frequently because it is taking up a cross: whereas it is evident to others that they do it because they love distinction and that it would be a much greater cross for them to be silent. Thus secretly does pride practice upon them so gross a deception.

3. There are others who imagine they have practised no self denial nor taken up any cross until they have excited the enmity and opposition of mankind. Because the carnal mind is enmity with God and the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God they hence conclude that if men do not hate them they do not possess the Christian character. And if they can excite men's enmity they feel confident that they are devoted Christians because the apostle has said all that will live godly in Christ must suffer persecution. Hence they attempt so to conduct towards others and so to present gospel truth that the world shall be disgusted with them. Now this is no very difficult matter for let a man judge us with severity and treat us with roughness - let him assume the character of a bigoted fanatic in whose veins there runs not one drop of the milk of human kindness - let him exhibit a heart puffed up with spiritual pride and we very soon become disgusted with such a person's character and if we take him as

a representative of Christianity we become disgusted with that also. And then such a person feels confident that he is bearing a very heavy cross and following Christ and that men hate him because he so much resembles Christ: whereas they hate him because he exhibits so much of pride and self-sufficiency and unfeeling severity in his conduct. For the truth is men may be led to hate professed Christians for the bad passions exhibited as well as for the devotedness. It is true unrenowned men do not love the truth of the gospel and it when strikes upon their conscience in its naked power it excites opposition. But it does not follow that they are offended with the instrument that conveys the truth to their minds: and there is so much real loveliness in the humble character of a follower of Christ that even impenitent men cannot but admire it and hence it is that often the most faithful minister finds many firm friends among that part of his people although the truths he delivers are like a two edged sword in their hearts. But they perceive that such ministers utter these truths through a wish to save and not to distress their souls and hence they love the man whose preaching they hate. Moreover it is but too true that in very many instances impenitent men are offended with the instrument merely on account of the truths of the gospel uttered by him. Yet it does not therefore follow that all disgust for those who profess to have religion proceed from opposition to the truth. It may proceed from the offensive manner in which truth is conveyed or from the little influence of it on the characters of those who deliver it. Yet the persons of whom I now speak seem to think that if ungodly men treat them with neglect or enmity it is on account of their piety and until they excite such feelings in others they do not feel as if they were sustaining any cross. But the fact is it is no very difficult matter to be faithful in admonishing and naming those whom we suppose to hate us: for in so doing we can lose nothing and besides we shall gratify a feeling of resentment that rises in every man's bosom upon the reception of an injury. And it is to be feared that what some call taking up the cross is nothing but giving vent to the envious or malignant feelings of a heart whose ambition has been disappointed and whose pride has been mortified. It is a real and a heavy cross to be faithful to those of our religious friends whom we love and by whom we are beloved and to do this in such a manner that while their hearts are reached their resentment shall not be excited.

But this leads me to the second head of this discourse in which I am to point out what it is to deny ourselves and to take up the cross. For although these duties do not imply the things already pointed out they do imply something and something too of vast importance: and the text is one of the most searching and alarming in the bible to the real Christian.

First then I remarked that to deny ourselves and take up the cross implies that we should be ready to sacrifice our lives in defense of the gospel when called to the trial.

The Saviour when he uttered the text has this particularly in view: for in subsequent verse he adds as an enforcement of the command, *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.* In the days of Christ those who followed him put their lives in jeopardy as the apostle says *every hour* and therefore it was peculiarly proper for Christ to prepare the minds of his disciples for the most tremendous cross. But since we at this day are rarely called to so severe a test of our faith it is unnecessary long to dwell upon it.

2. To take up our cross and deny ourselves implies a firm and resolute resistance of all our unholy and selfish passions and propensities. There is a cross applicable to men in every age and condition for such passions are ever found in the bosoms pleading with a strong voice for indulgence. How strongly does avarice solicit one believer to lay out treasures on earth and neglect his treasures in heaven! To clench his cold hand against the pleadings of want and benevolence and to let the love of money overpower in his bosom the love of God. And alas how many there are who have not strength to sustain the cross

which resistance would impose but who throw away the hopes of heaven for the paltry treasures of earth! How thoroughly how strongly does self love urge the Christian to seek own interests at the expense of his neighbors and be willing to raise the superstructure of his own pride and extravagance on the views of their fortunes and hopes - and wrapped up in the iron mantle of selfishness to steel his heart against the kindlier charities and sympathies of social life! How urgent are sometimes the sensual propensities of the Christian for a little indulgence and alas how often is his holy and heavenly character sunk and observed in that of the voluptuary the intemperate or the epicure! Pride too like a secret weapon swells the Christian heart and prompts him to think of himself above what he ought to think and leads him ere he is aware of it to adopt worldly extravagances inconsistent with the Spirit of the gospel and the claims of benevolence and charity. Nay even when he has followed his Redeemer most closely pride assuming its most hateful form lead him to value himself for his humility and devotedness and while he flatters himself to be a bright pattern of every Christian grace the world sees him to be a bloated mass of self-righteousness and spiritual pride. Nor is ambition wanting in her solicitations to draw away the believer from duty. Worldly distinctions she holds before him in all their delusive attractions and bids him aspire to the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats at the synagogue and be called up of men Rabbi.

No it is the business of self-denial and bearing the cross to resist most manfully these earthborn desires - these unholy propensities. There should the believers efforts be first and most warmly directed and to keep down these enemies of his soul to resist these lusts of the eye and lusts of the flesh and the pride of life will be found a cross heavy enough to be borne. We frequently see those who progress to be bearing very heavy crosses in warning and exhorting their brethren whose words and lives show that they know but little of that cross which lies within their own hearts. But here should our efforts begin or we are unfit to take up any other cross. Let not him whose lust and pride and worldliness are unsubdued fancy that he is bearing acceptably any other cross.

3. To deny ourselves and take up our cross implies that we hold firm to our Christian principles and conduct unseduced by the flatteries frowns and ridicule of the world. The opinion of the world and especially its ridicule and contempt do exert upon a certain class of men a most powerful influence. Many who would go undauntedly to prison and to death for religion will shrink from duty if the shaft of worldly ridicule be pointed at them. Some youth would much rather face the cannon's mouth than to have it said among their companions they have resolved to embrace and profess religion. Tell some men that by acting decidedly in favour of religion they would lose their popularity and they would sooner put a dagger to the heart as to take up a cross. Tell another man that by embracing religion he would become the ridicule of the learned and exalted whose favour he had striven to attain and his religious resolutions would be palsied at once. Here then is the cross to be taken up: and to do it with humility - to keep a steady and straightforward course whether the vexing wind of popular favour blow in favour of us or against us to remain unmoved even when the ridicule or the wrath of the world is turned against us - this is no light matter - no easy burden for flesh and blood to sustain.

4. To deny ourselves and take up the cross implies that we are faithful to our religious principles and our duty though surrounded with irreligious friends. And this I must believe is a cross more difficult and trying than almost any other. It is one from which more shrink than any other and under which multitude faint and sink down in despondency. It is very painful for us to differ in our sentiments from those we love the most important of all subjects. Yet it is a very common occurrence for persons to be compelled to do this or to give up what their consciences tell them is the only gospel by which they can be saved. And it is still more painful to differ in our practice essentially from our nearest and most intimate friends - to live as Christians while they live in the neglect of the duties God requires. But in

case the Christian is surrounded by irreligious friends he must not hesitate to take up his cross. He must practice those duties the Gospel requires or he will show that he has neither part nor lot in the matter. True at this day there are few so violently opposed to Christ and so destitute even of natural affection as to openly try to prevent their friends from acting agreeably to the dictates of conscience. But sometimes even this dreadful cross must be taken up and the believer must literally forsake father and mother husband wife and children to be hated of all men for Christ's sake. It is however a most common event for the husband to be compelled to leave the wife or the wife the husband or the parent the child or the child the parent or brother the sister or the sister the brother and to take a decided stand upon the side of the Lord and to live as a disciple of Christ although his friends go not with him - although he must go alone and set an example in favour of religion that shows to those friends in language not to be mistaken that they are in a dangerous situation. Nay it is the believer's duty in most cases to go farther and plainly to declare to his impenitent friends that he fears they are exposed to the wrath of God and that they must perish except they repent. Now to do all this in such a manner that the Christian's impenitent friends shall be irritated and offended is no very difficult task. But to do it in such an affectionate faithful manner that their hearts shall be melted and their resentments not excited here is the difficulty - here is the cross that needs the grace of God in double measure to sustain. It needs a spirit disciplined in the school of Christ a spirit almost incapable of resentment itself - a spirit mild and yet as resolute as an angels - it needs the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove. And after the believer has us taken a stand in favour of religion he needs a daily supply of grace to enable him to set such a pious example before his unregenerate friends as will operate insensibly upon them to follow his steps. Should his feet turn aside to the right hand of the left he may forever destroy the soul of some friend - and if he goes forward steadfastly in the way of duty he may save that soul from death. In such a situation too the believer is in constant danger of yielding to the example and solicitation of his irreligious friends - of making a compromise with the world and in a gradually losing his spirituality and devotedness. And here probably more fail than in any other respect. To prevent this the cross must not be borne occasionally only but daily.

Here then is a life of self-denial and crucifixion to the world that needs real Christian resolution and abundant grace to exalt us to lead. Yet it is no very uncommon course. Indeed such a situation in a greater or less degree is the lot of almost every Christian. But Christ has set the example and he will sustain and carry through every disciple who attempts sincerely and resolutely to follow him.

I close with a few remarks.

1. The subject shows us one of the sources whence a false peace and confidence proceed. A person mistakes some of the things that have been pointed out under the first head of the discourse for real self-denial and bearing the cross: and finding that those who do really take up the cross up are pronounced blessed in the scriptures he appropriates these promises to himself and exults in the supposed favour of God. Whereas in truth he may not possess one particle of the genuine Spirit of Christ and his peace and joy may be only a prelude to deeper agony when his delusions have been dissipated.
2. The subject shows us one cause why many believers walk so much in darkness. They shrink from the cross and the self-denial God requires of them and thus are thrown into doubt whether they are really born of God. And until they can rally resolution enough to overcome their supineness kindness and actually take hold of the cross they must remain shut out from the light of God's countenance. For God does not give peace and joy to those who do not the things which he requires.

Finally the subject shows us one of the causes why many Christians live in so happy a frame of mind.



They cheerfully take up every cross and endeavour to practice all the self-denial God requires. And it is scarcely possible for such persons to be unhappy or in darkness. God has almost inseparably united the faithful discharge of difficult and trying duties with peace and joy in believing. Let us then my brethren resolve that we will be sharers in that joy by being companions of those who tread in the steps of their Redeemer.

Delivered

At Conway August 1825

At Amherst West Parish August 1833

At Deerfield Second Parish August 1837

## Sermon 519 [Thy Heart is Not Right]

[Acts 8:21, 1825 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 5]

Acts 8:21

*Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.*

There are two standards and two judges by which human character is estimated. Man judges of it by the laws of human society and according to the external conduct because he cannot discern the thoughts and motives. God judges the heart according to the law of perfect holiness by comparing its exercises with the requirements of that law. His judgment therefore must be infallible while that of man is extremely liable to error. The external conduct however does sometimes so plainly reveal the state of the inner man that the judgment of man and the judgment of God agree. Take for instance an habitual and notorious sinner. Man can pronounce with infallible certainty that such an one has not the love of God within him as the moving principle of his actions. Such was the case mentioned in the text. Simon Magus was a sorcerer who had seduced multitudes and when Philip preached Christ and wrought miracles he professed to believe and was baptized. But his object in so doing was soon made manifest. It was merely the expectation of acquiring the power of working miracles and imparting this power to others which the apostles possessed that thus his trade might be more profitable. For when Peter imparted the Holy Ghost to the believers in Samaria by laying his hands upon them Simon offered him money to purchase the same power. This raised indignation of the apostles and he answered, *thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in sight of God.* In the sight of man there had been nothing previous to this that showed the bitterness of his heart: otherwise Philip would not have baptized him. But this single request at once laid open the selfish and detestable motives that actuated him so that no one could doubt but he was a vile hypocrite and Peter needed not inspiration to justify him in pronouncing him to be in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity nor is there any evidence that in this matter he was particularly guided by inspiration.

It is but rarely however that we are called on or allowed to decide absolutely concerning the state of a man's heart and to declare that he is an enemy of God. It is preferable and scriptural to leave the cases of the individuals to the decision of God. Yet the bible has given us certain marks by which to determine whether our hearts are right and it is the business of the minister to exhibit these marks to his hearers and leave them to make the application to themselves. I shall take occasion from the text to set before you certain decisive evidence of a state of heart that is not right in the sight of God: and if they apply to any who hear me it will not be because I have their cases in mind and (know their private history and) attempt to describe them but because God makes use of my voice to disclose to them their dangerous situation. And let it be remembered that when in this discourse I speak of the heart's not being right I do not mean merely some small defects but such a state of heart as is inconsistent with Christian character - inconsistent with an admittance into heaven.

First then I say to one man your heart is not right because it is manifest you love the things of the world better than the things of religion. In pursuit of worldly objects I see you zealous and persevering and unworried: but in religious things you soon grow weary and you do not take hold of them with that

heart felt interest you manifest in pursuit of worldly objects. You are very easily persuaded to neglect religious duties on account of a pressure of the world but very rarely if ever do you neglect the world to attend to religion. I appeal to your own conscience whether worldly objects do not excite within you a livelier interest than religious ones - whether your thoughts do not more naturally flow toward your farms your money your merchandise or your sensual pleasures than towards God? Are you not more careful to keep your business in order than your hearts? To look into the accounts between you and your neighbours and between your soul and your God? Are you not more distressed to see the seasons impropitious to your crops - to see your fields look barren and to have the rains of heaven withheld - then you are to find leanness in your soul - to live on week after week and be visited by no showers of divine grace - and to find so little fruit in your life? Do you say that duty to those who are depending on you requires your most unremitted attentions to worldly concerns? Grant that it does: yet if you loved God more than your business you would still feel a deeper interest in what relates to God than what relates to the world and when compelled to labour for the meat that perishes you would find a stronger relish for religious things when permitted to attend them than to worldly things. And let me ask you sincerely is this the case? If not what can it proceed from but a stronger attachment to the things of the world than to religion? But such a state of heart is radically wrong and must be corrected or you cannot be happy in eternity. For in that world there will be none of these worldly objects now so dear to interest you. Nothing will be there but religious objects and if your heart does not relish them you must be miserable. Think not that death will work such a transformation of character upon you that you will hereafter love those objects you now take no interest in and feel no desire after those you now love. Death has no power to change the affectations of the soul and as the bent of a man's disposition and attachment is that death so will it remain in eternity. He that is unjust will be unjust still and he that is filthy will be filthy still. Death only changes a man's state but not his character. Our habits of mind are not so easily altered that the mere dissension of soul and body can affect it. The worldly-minded man therefore must have a thorough change brought upon his heart or it cannot be fitted for a heaven of holiness.

2. I would say to another man that his heart was not right in the sight of God because he has no adequate view of his own sinfulness. The bible tells him that *his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked – that by nature he is a child of wrath even as others*. But he imagines himself to be rich and increased with goods and to have need of nothing. He thinks he discerns within his heart some native bias towards goodness and he does not believe himself to be so bad as the bible represents. But this inadequate sense of his own native vileness in the sight of God this unwillingness to acknowledge the justice of the charges the scriptures make upon him as at enmity with God only proves to every Christian that this man's heart is not right. For in the long catalog of those in every age who have given the most decided evidence of piety none are to be found who did not feel and confess this desperate wickedness of their hearts and if any one dissent from this concurrent voice of the pious in all ages to what can it be imputed but to an ignorance of the heart? And besides almost every Christian recollects before he was awakened he was subject to the power of this same delusion and resented the charge of such entire depravity as he found himself possessed of when the Spirit of God opened his eyes. How then can he avoid concluding that others with similar views are blinded by similar delusion? Every Christian too knows that a conviction of sin is the first step in the process of regeneration and that until this conviction takes place there is no hope that the heart will be rectified: *for they that are whole (or imagine themselves to be so) have no need of a physician but they that are sick*.

3. I would say to another man that his heart is not right because he has no realizing apprehension of his needs of the atonement of Christ. He may have heard this doctrine so frequently brought forward - he may have seen so much of it in the bible as to be led to conclude that somehow or other men are to be

saved through Jesus Christ. But he has never been brought to see his perishing need of such a Saviour and from his own experience to conclude that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby he can be saved. But how much out of the way does this show the heart to be every real Christian testifies that Christ is the chief among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely and that nothing but his cross can slay the enmity of the heart. The atonement is a doctrine interwoven with the experience of every believer and any one who has been made to see himself and the law of God in just colours could no more think of being saved without the proprietary sacrifice of Christ than of supporting his animal frame without nourishment. How important then that he who has no experimental knowledge of his need of such a sacrifice should have the transforming power of the grace of God exerted upon his heart!

4. I would say to another man that his heart is not right because he does not feel the need of that grace nor has it ever been exerted upon him. No man can deny because the Saviour has separated it with solemn emphasis that except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. If the man has not experienced regenerating grace his heart is so essentially wrong that he must be shut out of heaven. Yet notwithstanding this what multitudes who while they acknowledge that they know nothing of a change of heart seem to have no idea of their need of such a change nor do they cry to God for grace to convert them. And I know of nothing that shows so conclusively the desperate state of the heart - its awful stupidity and blindness as when a man acknowledges to me that he knows nothing of that change the Saviour declares essential to salvation and yet appears less anxious about it than the merest worldly trifle. He confesses himself in imminent danger of eternal woe yet it will not take a single step to escape while at the same time he will exert himself to the utmost to avoid the slightest danger to which his body is exposed. The case of such a person is pitiable in the extreme: for unless he does feel the need of converting grace and pray for it he must certainly perish. It is an undeniable truth that unless men make efforts after conversion they never will be converted. To sit still in expectation that a sudden and miraculous influence of the Spirit will sometime or other move upon our hearts and change them is one of the most wretched delusions that Satan ever passed upon men although it is one by which he has sent multitudes to perdition. The farmer has just as good reason to expect that the earth will spontaneously yield him its fruits though he lift not a finger to cultivate it as an ungodly sinner has to expect conversion who neither prays nor labours for it. What a monstrously perverse state of heart then must that man possess who without a new heart rests satisfied and secure.

5. I would say to another man that his heart is not right because he is unwilling to deny himself and make sacrifices for the cause of Christ. It is a cross for him to refuse conformity to those maxims and customs of the world which the Saviour forbids and therefore he tries to persuade himself that these practices are not inconsistent with the law of Christ and he adopts them. It is a cross to him boldly to confess Christ before the world: because this world imposes additional restraints upon him and render it necessary to be more circumspect in his public conduct and he might thus incur the reproaches and sneers of some ungodly companions. He therefore tries to persuade himself that he can be saved without a public confession of Christ and that he can be excused from it. It is a cross to him to instruct his children and domestics in religion and hence he professes to believe that as God is a sovereign he will be as likely to convert them without instruction as with it as he often does those who have been brought up in ignorance. God has given this man property but he has no idea that he is bound to use it for the promotion of religion. Or if he sometimes bestows a miserable pittance in answer to the calls of benevolence his stinted charity shows that he gives with grudging rather to save his reputation than to promote the cause of the Redeemer. He does not deny himself any of the luxuries of the table or of dress or of equipage that he may do more for the cause of benevolence. Nay he looks upon the expensive spirit of benevolence that is abroad at the present day with a jealous eye and feels impatient

that the calls for charity should be so frequent and loud. Now the difficulty with the man is that he knows nothing about making sacrifices for the cause of religion. He is willing that the cause of Christ should be filled with the crumbs that fall from his table but his heart is as averse to selling all that he has and giving it to the poor at Christ's command as was that young ruler who chose rather to sacrifice his soul than his money. But such a state of heart must be converted or this man will be lost. For Christ has said, *whosoever he be that for forsaketh not all that he hath he cannot be my disciple.*

6. I would say to another man that his heart is not right in the sight of God because he does not love his neighbour as himself. In his daily intercourse with his neighbours it is evident that his grand object is to advance his own temporal interest even at the expense of his neighbour's interest. Is he endeavouring to dispose of property? He does not just put such a price upon it as his own judgment shows is reasonable: but he endeavours to attain as much for it as he can even if he considers it more than the real value and if there are any defects in the article not likely to be discovered he does not acquaint his neighbour with the defects but endeavours to put it off as if it were perfectly good. Or if this man wishes to purchase an article of his neighbour he endeavours to obtain it as cheap as possible and not for what his judgment tells him is the real value and he takes particular pains to depreciate the value of the article. This is very far from loving his neighbour as himself. It is an attempt to promote his own interest at the expense of his neighbour's interest. And when the suffering of some unfortunate neighbour are recited to this man and his charity is asked instead of enquiring how he should wish his neighbour in a change of circumstances to do unto him in order to make this the measure of this charity he sets his invention at work to devise excuses and to ease conscience for his contemptible donation. Especially when he is urged to lend a helping hand to relieve the spiritual wants of his neighbours – it may be in a remote part of the land or across the ocean but still in a scripture sense his neighbours – it is then he shrinks most entirely into the shell of selfishness and shows how very different from what it ought to be is this man's feeling for his neighbour.

But still farther this man's heart may be the seat of positive bitter deep rooted and long continued hatred towards his neighbour. In consequence of some former insult he may have suffered a wall of separation to grow between them which has become strong and impassable. He may so hate his neighbour as to refuse to him the common civilities of life and not even be willing to pray for him. An angel would not believe it possible for such a degree of hatred as this long to be harboured in the heart of a being so frail and dependant as man and so constantly exposed to be summoned to the bar of God to meet the object of his hate. But alas the frightful history of mankind shows us that a man may thus feel for your years towards those who were created his brethren. What conclusive evidence does such a case afford that the heart is essentially and deeply wrong! O how can any man suffer the venom of hatred to be praying for years upon his heart and eating it away like an active of poison how can he endure the perpetual gnawing of hate and jealousy and revenge! Let us empty out my hearers the corroding mixture if we have drank it and pour into our bosoms the healing balm of brotherly love.

To multiply no more marks of a wrong state apart I close with a few remarks.

1. The subject should lead us to weep over fallen man. We should weep to see his heart so changed so prevented from the purity and holiness of Eden. Sin has perverted our tastes clouded our understandings and rendered our wills perverse; so that we now voluntarily kiss the chains that bind us in horrid subjection. Selfishness has taken the place of benevolence within us and those noble faculties God has given us are besotted and in danger of being ruined forever. Men's hearts are wrong radically wrong - and without a change in them they must be wretched forever: yet how few are there who are sensible that their hearts are not right in the sight of God! How few who seriously think of God or of

those awful scenes that await them beyond the grave! Now all this is the effect of sin - all this desolation - this moral ruin this perversion this deception this blindness this stupidity are the first fruits of our apostasy. If then the boastful antiquary can weep as he surveys the ruining of Athens and Corinth if the farmer can weep as he looks upon his desolate fields after the hurricane has passed over it surely man ought to weep as he casts his eyes over a fallen and sinful world – all pressing forward to everlasting woe and but a few accepting the offered rescue.

2. The subject ought to cause us to tremble for ourselves and our fellow men. For ourselves we should tremble lest the extreme deceitfulness of our heart should after all so blind us to our real condition that we shall be lost. We should tremble for others because they are in the same danger. Nay we see multitudes whose lives testify in a voice not to be mistaken that their hearts are radically wrong in the sight of God who spend all their lives under the influence of a fatal delusion and who never know their real character till they awaken in hell. And think my hearers of awakening in hell. Think of being left forever to the power of such wicked hearts as we possess while unrenewed. Think of being forever made the prey of those restless passions that even in this life often produce the extremity of wretchedness. You need not add the gnawing of the worm or the devouring fire to constitute a hell awful beyond description. To be compelled to dwell forever with beings whose only principle of action is supreme urged on to tenfold greediness by consuming passions this would be a doom unutterably awful. And when we reflect that this may be our doom - and that multitudes around us are pressing on with almost infallible certainty to that state of despair - it ought to alarm us - it will make the man tremble who sees the picture in its true light. O for some almighty arm to check the torrent of deluded sinners who are dropping one after another into perdition.

3. The subjects should lead us to pray for our selves and others. If our hearts are not right in the sight of God such is their desperate wickedness and deception that they never will be any better unless God renews them. And if others around us - who either love the world supremely - or have no adequate view of their own sinfulness or their need of a Saviour or of regenerating and sanctifying grace or who practice no self-denial and make no sacrifices for Christ or who hate their brother - if any of these are ever brought to a knowledge of themselves of their danger and their remedy it must be not by might nor by power but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts. That Spirit is given in answer to fervent effectual prayer. If then we feel our own and others' danger enough to weep over it and tremble at it we must feel it enough to pray God to remove it. There is absolutely no hope and no help from any other quarter. But blessed be God he is more ready to give the Holy Spirit than earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. God has opened the eyes of many as blinded and perverted as sinners around us and he can do it again. But he will be enquired to do this for the house of Israel and my hearers my brethren if the wretched condition of sinners is not a spectacle sad enough to move us to pray for them then ought we to fear that our own hearts are not right and that none are labouring under a deeper delusion or exposed to a heavier doom than ourselves.

Delivered

At Conway July 1825

At Conway September 1842

At Belchertown January 1828

At Amherst East Parish August 1835

At Amherst West Parish December 1836

## Sermon 520 [Where Art Thou?]

[Genesis 3:9, 1825 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 2]

Genesis 3:9

*And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou?*

*[Mention of a death in the church on page 10, prayers "for this place" on page 12. The alternate ending seems to be addressed to several churches and the college.]*

This was the first instance in the history of our world of the manifestation of that fatal alienation from God which is the consequence of sin. And it is curious to mark how in this respect the first transgression corresponds with every subsequent offense against God. The inevitable effect of sin has always been make the presence and the thought of God unpleasant to the transgressor and he would fain hide himself from the divine inspection. And the same sort of delusion that led Adam and Eve to fancy that the trees of Paradise would screen them from the searching glance of Omniscience has ever made men feel themselves away from the immediate inspection of their God and Judge when busily occupied in worldly pursuits and pleasures. Our first parents had just been guilty of that fatal act which sent sin and misery through every part of the world down to its latest generation and will people the world of everlasting woe. And now the hour of still evening approached when they were wont to offer their united supplications and thanksgiving to their bountiful Father - the hour when God condescended to walk with them among the trees of the garden and permitted them to hold sweet intercourse with him. But how should they now meet him - how address him - for they had eaten of the forbidden fruit - and violated that only prohibition enjoined upon them. Conscience for the first time now roused upon them with her whip of scorpions and caused them to shrink from their wonted interview and attempt concealment from Omniscience. With what an overwhelming power then must the voice of God have sounded in their ears - *Adam where art thou?* Why shrink from my presence? Why not meet me as before? Has not my watchful care been over you as on informer days and does it not demand the return of gratitude and have you no delight in my society? Oh had the thunderbolt of omnipotence burst upon them at once it had not been half so dreadful as as this most cutting enquiry - *Where art thou?* But at the same time it was a most salutary enquiry: for it must have brought the past goodness of God and their ingratitude before their minds and led them to contrast their present guilt with their former innocence and thus have tended to excite within deep repentance - now their only hope.

And so it is useful for us my hearers the descendants of Adam - often to put the same enquiry to ourselves - *where art thou* - in a state of favour and serenity and peace with heaven or in a state of enmity - in the strait path of duty or the devious ways of transgression - living with a heart set upon another world or with affections devoted supremely to this? Holding daily intercourse with God and living afar from him and buried in worldly cares or pleasures?

In applying this text to ourselves I shall not however take a wide range as these enquiries point out. I shall confine them to Christians and ask each one of you my brethren *where art thou?* at this time - not where you once was - where you now are?

True if this were the proper place or occasion this question might be more solemnly put to him who is living altogether without God and without hope and if we could succeed in inducing such an one to pause long enough to see his alarming condition it would arouse him to seek salvation with all his soul. Or could we persuade the person who feels a degree of anxiety for his soul to look at his condition and his imminent danger while resisting reason conscience and the Spirit of God he would not dare to remain any longer in such a fearful state. But as this is not the appropriate season for pressing such enquiries I waive them. My business at this time is with Christians - and they too need frequently to pause and enquire where they are in regard to religion in their own souls and in the world around them. If they do not make frequent pauses and put frequent questions of this kind they are in an alarming state.

Come then my brethren and around this table of the Savior ere we pretake of the sacred elements let us pause and enter into an examination of our real characters and present condition. And may the Good Spirit of God be present with us to make us solemn and faithful in this investigation.

Enquire then of yourself Christian for God enquiries of you *where art thou* as it respects the general tenor of your conduct and feelings? Is the mark of religion pure and undefiled impressed upon your life so that others around us plainly perceive that we are living for eternity? Do we obviously take a deeper interest and engage with more earnestness in the cause of religion than in secular pursuits? Are we habitually intent upon glorifying God and modifying our ungodly propensities or is our religion merely periodical - now hurrying us forward with a sort of frantic zeal and now for months and years leaving us almost without a mark of piety? And do we find the Christian graces growing upon us - our selfishness giving place to disinterested benevolence - hearts becoming willing to make greater sacrifices in the cause of Christ - and feeling more dead to the world - our apprehensions of eternal realities becoming more impressive and constant and our anxiety for souls more intense: in short do we perceive a gradual and increasing sanctification of our whole man and a corresponding subdual of our unholy propensities? We know brethren what unless such a sanctification does take place within us we can have no well grounded hope that we are the children of God: and therefore these enquiries deserve our most serious consideration.

But it is important that I should descend to particulars and again I ask the question *where art thou* in regard to religious exercises? And among these the greatest is charity or holy love. For though every other mark of Christian character be ours - and we submit to the severest sacrifices and labours for the cause of Christ if destitute of this charity Paul tells us we are nothing. When we ardently love an earthly object it is not difficult to determine that we do so: for it will engross our thoughts desires and intentions. Now if we were to judge of our attachment to God's character and cause in the same manner what conclusion must we form concerning our real state? It is absurd to suppose a man a Christian who does not love God: and my brethren do you find such a love in exercise? Is your heart daily drawn towards him and does his character excite not merely admiration but love? And what is the state of our love to Christ? This must be stronger than that towards our nearest earthly friends or we are not worthy of him and cannot be his disciples. And do you my brethren take more interest in the welfare of Christ's cause than in the welfare of your families and friends? Does insult and opposition to him arouse you as much as insult to your family? Does it harm you as much to hear Christ spoken against as to hear your family slandered and abused? Does the neglect his cause receives in the world grieve you and distress you as much as to be yourself neglected? If we possess this charity or love we shall feel it in lively exercise towards our fellow Christians. Wherever we see the image of Christ we shall count that man a brother and though our worldly interest may be opposed to his we cannot help feeling towards him an



attachment. His character will interest us more than that of any other man who is not a Christian however amiable his external conduct. And not to extend the enquiry farther do we my brethren live in the exercises this affection towards our brethren of this church? Does their welfare lie near our hearts and are we more disposed to speak well of one another than to circulate the unfavourable report? Do we feel such a tenderness towards one another that when such an unfavourable report is in circulation we are more apt to go to our brother and inform him of it and ask an explanation than to lend wings to the story by whispering it in the ears of others? Surely my hearers if we do not find in lively exercise these in Christian feelings - love to Christ and love to our brethren it must be either because we have no charity or because it lies dormant within us and has not warmth enough to melt those surrounding it. Nor is this all: the Lord that loves these objects will also love with the love of piety all those unhappy men who will not embrace religion but prefer hugging the chains that bind them to this world and the cold dungeon that shuts them in. When the Christian muses upon the wretched condition of sinners and recollects that they are in the same stupid unconcerned state in which he lives for many years his love toward them rises to anxious solicitude. Does such a feeling habitually possess our hearts my fellow communicants? If not where are we in religion?

If the heart of the Christian has become cold in the service of God - if it be not moved by religious exercises it is the seat of the irreligious ones. I enquire therefore where are thou in regard to love to the world? Have you not often been induced to neglect the public ordinances of religion through your indefatigable attention to objects merely worldly? Have not your family prayers often been hurried and unfeeling because the world would not allow you time? Have you not often been kept from your closets for days and even weeks because you could not find time to attend to secret duties? If so what excuse can you render for such devotedness to an inferior object to that Saviour who hath said seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

But to come to other Christian exercises I ask Christian where art thou in regard to faith? No Christian's grace is more apt to languish than this when the believer wanders from God. And since faith consists essentially in a childlike confidence in the moral character of God in a Redeemer who is it possible it should exist in lively exercise in that man's heart who can live in the violations of God's law and in the neglect of known duties. Faith makes the things of eternity real to the mind and he who believes with the strength of reality all the threatenings and promises of scripture relating to man must be moved by them to vigorous action. What then is our state my brethren in regard to faith? Do we walk Do we walk by faith or by sight? Do we place such a confidence in God that we fearlessly follow where his providence points out the way - even if it lead us like Abraham into difficulties and dangers? Are the great doctrines of scripture so deeply rooted in our experience that we are altogether unmoved by the suggestions sceptics against them? Is our faith of such a character that it leads us to tread the world under our feet - to live with a constant impression of the presence of God and with a sense of our accountability to God? Amid the various trials and reverses that we meet does faith give us firm support and cause what seems to the world the deepest calamity to become the source of satisfaction and holy peace? Or on the other hand is our faith so weak so inoperative that we are destitute of all spirituality of mind and rarely think of eternal realities? Do not doubts concerning the truth of religion often cross our minds - do we know what is meant by living by faith on the son of God looking not to the things that are seen and temporal but to the things unseen and eternal? When we pray for the conversion of our friends have we any faith or confiding expectations that we shall be heard? Do present and sensible objects affect and control us more powerfully than the things of God and religion? Do the frowns and flatters of men operate more powerfully upon us than the threatenings and promises of God?

If our faith be thus feeble it will not answer for us my brethren to continue in such a state. Something

must be done to awaken it into more vigorous exercise.

I enquire too where art thou in respect to your hope? The answer to this enquiry will depend upon the state of our faith since it is faith that produces a genuine hope and the want of faith is attended by want of hope - unless it be that of the hypocrite. Does your hope rest upon certain exercises you experienced in former years while the present state of your heart and life lends no confirmation to past evidence? But this is a hope that will certainly perish when God taketh away your soul. Or do you confess your hope to be feeble and yet feel unalarmed. Then is your condition little better than desperate: for it shows you steeled against the threatenings of Omnipotence. My brethren the apostles had a firm hope of heaven and though I may condemn myself yet I cannot see but they require Christians to have a hope - as well founded hope of salvation and to be entirely destitute of one argues therefore an extremely unhappy temperament or more frequently a criminal coldness in religious duties. For after all it is by holy devoted obedience that is by the fruits of faith that we are to obtain a good hope through grace. And there are multitudes who go mourning all their days almost cut off from hope who would find all their doubts removed if they did not love the world so well - if they would contribute liberally to objects of benevolence - if every returning month they would make a valuable bequest to send the Gospel to the heathens, and enter actively into religious labours - sacrifices in the cause of Christ are what is wanted to remove our doubts my hearers. Lamenting and weeping and praying over our condition will not give us a hope unless at the same time we act and act vigorously in favour of religion unless we test our feelings by sacrifice and self-denial.

This leads me to enquire in the next place concerning Christian duties - and in regard to these where are you brethren? What are the sacrifices you are making for the cause of Christ - not thereby to claim heaven on the ground of reward but because you love that cause and wish thus to obtain evidence of your Christian character? When your duty to God clashed with the wishes of your nearest friends have you resolutely forsaken father and mother wife and brother and adhered to your God and Saviour?

When some worldly good was offered to us and we could not obtain it without endangering our souls or injuring the cause of Christ have we cheerfully abandoned it? When some worldly object had become an idol and the alternative would be for us either to part with it or lose our souls have we cheerfully stretched out the right hand to the axe and cut it off? When an alluring path was open before us where our souls might be endangered have we forborne to enter it preferring the plain and beaten path God has marked out? When objects of benevolence solicited our attentions have we urged our poverty - or trials or embarrassments as an excuse for not lending them assistance or have we resolved we would deny ourselves some lawful conveniences and comforts in order to promote them - preferring the good of our fellow man to our own ease and indulgence?

This leads me to enquire where art thou Christian in regard to those duties that relate particularly to the souls of those with whom you are connected? What have we done to serve the souls of the ungodly - what to save our own families from perdition - what by way of conversation - what by way of example and what by secret prayers? Their good must lie near the heart of everyone who is really a Christian and if we do not make vigorous efforts in their behalf we cannot be in a state such as is acceptable to God.

Once more I enquire where are we brethren in regard to conformity to the world? Have we been as anxious to ascertain what was our duty towards God as to determine the prevailing tastes and fashions of the world? And have we as promptly followed the commandments of God as we have the vain and idle customs of men? It cannot be that a real Christian should be more faithful to the world than to his God - almost men calling themselves such may be.

Finally I ask where art thou Christians in regard to prayer. This is one of the most important enquiries I have made: for hence hands is derived a touchstone of our piety. One of the first fruits of Paul's conversation was - *behold he prayeth*, and so does every man pray when he supposes himself converted. But concerning the hypocrite who asks *will he pray always*? No: he will not: and herein lies a plain mark of distinction between the real child of God and the self-deceived professor. I do not therefore hesitate to say my brethren nor is it uncharitable to say that if any of us are living month after month in the general neglect of daily secret prayer such persons have no reason to believe that they are Christians: they give almost as strong evidence as can be given that they are altogether destitute of religion. It would seem as if there could be no dispute on this point for all who have taste of the grace of God know that prayer is as essential to the life of the Christian as breath is to the existence of the animal frame. It is not a speculative point: it is a practical one. What then is our state my hearers in regard to secret prayer? Are we in the habit of it or are we not? God forbid that anyone of us should be compelled to answer in the negative: for this would deprive him of all well-grounded evidence of his Christian character.

And now my brethren if we find ourselves deficient in regard to those subjects that have been now brought before us - if like Adam we are hiding ourselves from the presence of the Lord - there is no place more proper to commence a reformation than around this table of the Redeemer (in this house of God). Here we see what our ingratitude has done: how it has pierced to the soul's beneficent Saviour and how his blood flowed freely for us. And if with such a scene before our imaginations we can continue to live afar from God - we resist the most powerful motives that can be offered to us to repent and give strong reason to fear that we know nothing of true religion and are guilty of the body and blood of Christ. And my brethren almost every sabbath does the providence of God put into my hands a most powerful argument to enforce religious truth and to urge us to do with our might what our hearts *find to do*. I do not come to you merely to warn you that you must die but to tell you that you are dying - and point you to one branch after another from your body. Since the last Sabbath two have entered eternity from the midst of this people. This very morning we have deposited in the grave the emaciated remains of one of the members of this church: who although cordially attached as we have reason to believe to the ordinances of God's house has not been permitted through infirmity to enter or even to behold the sanctuary for more than 30 years. But even to the last hour of a weary existence did faith in Christ sustain her soul long tried in the furnace of affliction. Since our last communion two of our members have left us: and my brethren the snow of our mountains which is now melting away beneath the warmer wind and rain is a fit emblem of this church melting away before the blast of death. How many more of our numbers stand even now teetering on the brink of eternity with the frost of age on their heads or with the worm of disease preying upon their life! And shall we who yet remain look unmoved on this spectacle of decay. Shall we slumber on in a mad eternity until disease and death have paralyzed our energies? Now is the time for us to pause - the time to enquire what is our condition - what the state of our souls and what ought to be their condition. Like the soldiers an army who expect every hour the order to march to the conflict and who therefore keep their armor ever buckled upon them so should we the soldiers of the cross not presume to lay aside the armour of the gospel not knowing when the captain of our salvation will summon us to our last and deadliest conflict and if in that hour found watching how easy will be our victory - how glorious our reward!

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*[This may be the original end of the sermon. It is followed by several pages that appear to be an alternate ending written either for Amherst College or for a special occasion involving multiple churches? Note the references to "college and town" and to "churches".]*

And now my brethren and I feel constrained to say and since I include myself in the charge it is not uncharitable to say that the present very low state of practical religion in the college and in town shows us where we are in religion. Since I have known this place I have rarely if ever seen a time when the power of religion seemed to be so little manifested by professing Christians in general or when the slumbers of unconverted men were so undisturbed and profound. True the preachings of the gospel and other means of grace are still attended to and we can with as much skill as ever decide upon the merits of this eloquence and the orthodoxy of the sermons we hear. But how little manifestation do we see of that mighty power of divine truth which has so often in years past brought low the loftiest imagination and subdued the proudest heart and brought a foretaste of heaven into the believer's soul. I do not doubt indeed that there are noble exceptions to these statements: but what can the warm hearted zeal of a few devoted Christians accomplish when surrounded by such an icy mass of formalism as most of us exhibit? The truth is that as churches we have got into such a state of spiritual alienation and deadness that we have no idea how far we have fallen. Were each one of us to sit down day after day to the work of honest faithful self-examination and prayer and if God's Spirit should arouse our slumbering consciences I verily believe that many of us should at once abandon the hope that we are Christians. How can we be Christians and sleep so quietly year after year when we know that the special influences of God's spirit have abandoned us and our own children and neighbours and friends are living without God and dying without hope. It is indeed high time for us either to abandon our cobweb hopes or to awake to our duty. The powers of God are upon us and temporal as well as eternal ruin is before us unless God turns again the captivity of Zion. One thing alone can save us: and to obtain that was the object of setting apart this day to special prayer and fasting. That one thing is all we need to make these churches (this church) devoted holy and eminently useful all that we need for the conversion and salvation of our children and neighbours all that we need to make this place a Bethel and to fill every one of our hearts with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And yet I truly believe that most of us who profess religion have not as sincere and strong a desire for this one thing as we have for money for reputation (for literary distinctions) or for animal gratifications. For these worldly objects our whole conduct shows us to have strong and sincere desires to attain them we have already made great sacrifices and submitted to incredible labour. But unless God be a liar he is ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him – even more ready than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. And the Holy Spirit is the one thing needful which should be the single (greatest) object of our prayers today and whenever we pray for this place. What a mighty and transforming influence have we witnessed in days past upon this people when visited by that spirit! How guilty are we that he has been resisted and driven away. And how stupefied are our hearts how degraded and perverted our taste that we can feel willing to live without his special presence: willing to have the beams of the Sun of Righteousness withdraw and to go down to grief in the prison house of this world! Ah when shall the dawning of that sun again light up the east! When shall that Spirit come down as rain upon the mown grass and as showers that will water the earth and the frozen bands of selfishness and pride and worldliness be melted from our hearts! When shall we hear again the prophet profits of the Lord lifting up his voice in this valley of dry bones and saying by the command of Jehovah prophecy - *Prophesy unto the wind, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord; come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they might live.*

## Delivered

At Conway March 1825

At Leverett June 1832

At Amherst West Parish September 1833

At Amherst College January 1835

At Amherst College February 29th 1844

At Hadley Mills July 1836

At Deerfield Evening meeting September 1836

At Hadley February 26 1837

At Pelham April 16 1837

At Amherst West Parish Fast day February 29 1844

At Amherst College January 1847

## Sermon 521 [Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord]

[Isaiah 40:3, 1825 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 3]

Isaiah 40:3

*Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*[A discussion about dissension within the church in general. There is no mention of his church.]*

The word in the passage translated Lord is in the original Jehovah. Yet the prophet here speaks of the Messiah Jesus Christ. John the Baptist settled this point when he quoted this verse in reply to the Jews who came to him to ascertain his true character. This is he says John *that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah the voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord make his paths strait*. This is only one among many instances in the old testament in which Christ is called Jehovah. But this name is never applied to any but the supreme God: Jesus Christ therefore is the supreme God - otherwise you must say that Jehovah is a creature.

The prophet in the passage looks forward to the time of the introduction of the gospel into the world: for to this period John the Baptist has shown this prophecy applies. The infinite Saviour who then appeared to is represented as having a way prepared for him that he might come with a proper dignity and find all in readiness for the accomplishment of his work. An allusion is here made to the conduct of distinguished princes who when they enter visiting a remote and impassable part of their dominion with an army sent forward as pioneers remove obstructions and prepare a path over which they may pass in ease and safety. So before the coming of Christ, *every valley must be exalted, every mountain and hill made low - the crooked be made straight and the rough places plain*. The ministry of John the Baptist who preached repentance and works meet for repentance - had a tendency to produce such an effect upon the Jewish church. And God by a variety of means had put the world in the attitude of expectation when the Saviour appeared.

But this text was not confined to the days of the apostles. It seems to embrace the whole period of the gospel dispensation from its first promulgation at Jerusalem to its final establishment in all the earth. For the same infinite Saviour is advancing from one conquest to another in every succeeding age and it is still necessary to *prepare the way of the Lord to make straight in the desert an highway for our God*. Alas it is still in the desert in a spiritual sense wherever in this dark world the Saviour goes. It is a desert where is seen on every side the blighting influence of sin where only here and there a plant of holiness seems to rear its stunted head and struggles with the dry and unpropitious climate and barren soil in which it is placed. The way of holiness which one went through this world a broad and a beautiful path has blocked up and planted in it briars and thorns. It is the removal of these obstructions that constitutes the main part of the preparation necessary for welcoming our Prince and Saviour as he comes to visit us in mercy and to seek seek to save that which was lost. And he has the power to sweep away at once every obstruction for *all power is given him in heaven and in earth*. But his wisdom chooses to employ men as instruments in accomplishing this work: for it is his desire to save not to destroy his enemies. And it is when he comes in a special manner to save them in multitudes that the greatest preparation is necessary. He often enters particular churches and particular congregations

accompanied by his Spirit wielding the word of God whence many an arrow is hurled *into the hearts of his enemies whereby they are subdued under him*. It is to urge you my brethren and to prepare for such a season - usually termed a revival of religion - that I now address you from the words of my text.

It appears from what has been said that when Christ comes for the revival of his work - for a rapid multiplication of converts to his cause his path lies through the church - I say his path lies through the church - and it is not till he has passed over that part of the path occupied by his professed friends that he can reach that part where are his enemies. And if there are certain obstructions in the first part of his path he never will proceed to the second part until the stumbling blocks are removed out of the way. It is true this is speaking after the manner of man and I do not mean that there is any physical impossibility in the way of Christ converting men even if every one of the church are dead in trespasses and sins. But there is a moral impossibility in the way. The principles of the divine government founded in perfect wisdom - do not permit the conversion of sinners until the hearts of his children are of a part of them are in certain state of preparation.

Nor does this preparation relate merely to the church as a body but to them also as individuals. And when I say that Christ's path lies through the church I do not mean to the church as a body only but also through the hearts of individuals and obstructions here do as effectually prevent his advancing farther as disorders in the general state of the church.

In discussing this subject more particularly it is natural to consider first what are the obstructions in the general state of a church that are to be removed out of the way in order that Christ may ride forth in the chariot of his salvation from the conquering to conquer.

And first the discipline of such a church must be in a state that is agreeable to the gospel. The rules of the gospel on this subject are quite plain. When a brother lives in the habit of known sin - of such a sin as is capable of public proof - it is a duty imperiously binding upon us to enter with him into a process of discipline: and pursue it so far as is necessary either to bring him to repentance or to eject him from our communion. Nor have we any right to expect that Christ will make any special manifestation of his grace among us until this be done: for it shows the hearts of such a church to be in one sort of preparation for a visit from the great head of the church. It is time indeed that sometimes the conduct of our brother may be of such a kind as to bring reproach upon the name and cause of Immanuel and any one may be satisfied of his guilt and yet from peculiar circumstances we may be incapable of making public proof of his transgressions. In such a case though the world - even ready enough to fix some reproachful stigma upon the church - may condemn us for remissness yet we do not seem to be required to enter upon a course of public discipline because we know the offending individual will triumph over the church. We must in such case wait - and usually it is not necessary to wait long - until such an offender proceed to take other steps in the course of apostacy that can easily be reached and made manifest before a public tribunal.

Secondly alienations bitterness and contentions among brethren must be removed from the church in order to prepare the way for the coming of Jehovah Jesus. With what earnestness do the scriptures press upon the members of the same communion the duty of loving one another! And this is not done without reason: for when love is gone from the church its glory is gone and the world look upon it with contempt. When the heathen in primitive times looked at the church they were forced to exclaim, *see how these Christians love one another!* But what must be the effect when men as they look at the church are forced to say, *see how these Christians hate one another!* And furthermore while brethren of a church are engaged in contention and indulge hard feelings towards one another not a single prayer

they offer up is heard or answered. Brotherly love not in appearance merely but in reality is indispensably necessary in making preparation for the coming of Christ (to revive his works). And so long as brethren will continue to slander and contend with each other they may rest assured that they are preventing the approach of Christ. And it is probable that this bitterness of feeling puts a stop to more revivals of religion than any other cause whatever. When a church continues a long time without a revival although many in it are earnestly praying for it those who have bitter envyings in their hearts toward any of their brethren may be almost sure that they stand in the way: and let them tremble to think for how many mired souls they must answer at the judgment day. Let them remember too that they cannot be Christians unless they take every means in their power to be reconciled to their brethren. They will assuredly be cast into the very lowest place in hell if they do not love their brethren. I know such persons will frame a thousand excuses - such as their innocence and that it is the duty of those they contend with to make the first application to them for settlement of the difficulty. But whether they be innocent or not again I say let them remember that if they do not take every measure in their power to affect a reconciliation with their brother the lowest place in hell must be their eternal portion. For they are the accursed thing that cause a curse and not a blessing to hang over the church to which they belong. They will not enter themselves into the kingdom of heaven neither will they suffer those that would enter in.

Thirdly in order to prepare the way for the coming of Jehovah Jesus the members of the church must speak often one to another as did the saints mentioned by Malachi. They must often converse on religious subjects when they meet. They must confess their faults one to another and talk of one another's experience and of the best ways of promoting the coming of Christ to revive his works. They must get rid of the coldness and distance and distrust so common among those who profess to belong to Christ and learn one another's views and feelings and endeavour to kindle each other's Christian affections and warm each other's devotion. They must talk of the coming of Christ and enquire of one another what are the stumbling blocks that must be taken out of his way. Very powerful will be the effect of such conversations to prepare a church for the advent of him who travels in the greatness of his strength and is mighty to save. Let those in a church who avoid such intercourse with their brethren remember that they are the obstructions in the way of Christ's approach and that they prevent the richest of all mercies - regenerating grace - from descending upon sinners around them.

Fourthly another preparation of a church for the coming of Jehovah Jesus is not to forsake the assembling of themselves together - alas that the apostle was obliged to act *as the manner of some is* - and also that we are obliged to respect the declaration in these days. A church must repeatedly come together to pray in concert or they cannot make ready for the proper reception of their Lord and Master: for it is only the grace of God after all that can duly prepare us and peculiar blessings are promised to united prayer. There is great reason to fear I do not say it is always so: but there is great reason to fear that those who rarely come to unite with their brethren in prayer and praise and conversation except on the sabbath are not in the habit of praying in their closets. And how is it possible Christ should visit any church except in judgment when there are many who lie in the neglect of social and secret prayer! He will not do it - and such persons may rest assured that they stand in the way of his approach and will have answer for tremendous consequences.

My brethren are there not many among us who never come into the social circle to unite with our brethren in prayer and conversation upon religion except on the sabbath. And have you ever seriously and in view of the judgment considered whether your reasons for this neglect will not make you blush at last? Can you lay your hands on your hearts and say that you are in the habit of secret prayer? Until you can be persuaded at least occasionally to join in the social prayer meeting I have little or no hope that



Jehovah Jesus will convert sinners in this place. But if you would come to the place of prayers and heartily join in it I should feel a strong confidence that the Saviour was at hand and would largely bless us and convert multitudes. Why then will you on whom rest the vows of the Lord stand in the way of your Saviour! I know I shall be told that I am not sensible how difficult it is for you to unite with your brethren at special seasons. But my brethren when I find these difficulties preventing you from attending to your worldly concerns I shall admit the plea. But how can I cease to urge you to awake to the subject when I really fear that you are standing in the way of the salvation of multitudes around you.

As a second general branch of this discourse I inquire what are the obstructions in hearts and lives of individual Christians that must be removed on the way to prepare for the coming of Jehovah Jesus.

The first instruction is a negative one but still one that lies at the root of all the rest and necessary first to be removed or the others will remain. It is the want of faithfulness in self examination and secret prayer. No man attends to religion - no man advances in religion until he sets down and seriously meditates upon the subject. It is while we muse that the fire begins to burn. It is meditation that shows us our sinfulness and awakens the disposition to pray. Let the Christian go to his closet ever so much indisposed for prayer and let him spend one half hour looking into his heart and life and it would be a wonder if he were not constrained to offer up his supplication *with strong crying and tears to him that is able to save*. In answer to such prayers God will open his eyes to see those obstructions in his heart or life that prevent the coming of the Saviour to pour out his spirit. Self - examination and secret prayer then lie at the foundation of all preparation for revival. The man who did not commence here is all wrong however hide his affections and however flaming his zeal.

Secondly this course will show most Christians that their worldliness their love of the world and conformity to it is a powerful obstruction to the coming of Christ that must be removed out of the way. In a backslidden state believers love and serve the creature more than the creator. They give occasion for the enquiry what do ye more than others? And should Christ come among them they would pay more attention to the farm the money the merchandise the dress or the equipage than to him. They must throw aside their idols and erect an altar to the Lord - they must look less to the things that are seen and temporal and more to those that are unseen and eternal. They must sweep away and burn off the worldly rubbish that blocks up the Saviour's path or they will stand in the way of conversion of others. When the Saviour comes among his people specially it is a sort of review day when he examines their armour - their shield of faith - their breastplate of righteousness - and their helmet of salvation - to see if they are bright and well fixed upon them. But how disgraceful to the Christian soldier if his captain should find him stripped of his armour and having on the armour of the world. What if in the place of love to him he should find love to the world - instead of humility pride and worldliness instead of heavenly mindedness! Oh my brethren let us arise and shake off a spirit so disgraceful to us and prepare to meet him whom we profess to love in a becoming manner.

Thirdly our unfaithfulness to the impenitent must be must be taken out of the way. There must be a sort of preparation made in their hearts through the instrumentality of believers for the coming of Christ. The Baptist addressed every class of men calling on them to repent because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. And so must believers now call up on their irreligious neighbours and friends to prepare to meet the bridegroom. In order that we should address them with the proper spirit it is necessary that our hearts be in a state of preparation for the Saviour's coming.

I am led to state as a fourth obstruction the little sense Christians have of the danger of souls around them or of the worth of those souls. And the grand cause of this forgetfulness is a worldly spirit that has

seized our own hearts. Our faith is scarcely in exercise at all and eternal things are of course distant and indistinct. But could we see our ungodly children and friends suspended as they actually are by the feeble and brittle thread of life over the blackness of darkness forever - and faith show them in that condition - we could not rest until we had told them their danger in a kind and affectionate manner and if they would not hear or believe their blood would rest upon their own and not upon our heads.

There is another excuse that operates unfavorably to produce this remissness. We get an idea that our children and friends are really Christians because they were once awakened and seem yet perhaps occasionally tender on religious subjects. Our partiality and friendship for them lead us to think that should they die we should not be without hope for them. But the truth is this is a most dangerous conclusion. We ought not to rest until our friends give decided evidence of piety by professing the name of Christ before the world and living according to these vows. All other evidence on amounts to little more than a mere possibility - and it is extremely hazardous to place any reliance upon it.

Finally our lukewarmness and lack of zeal for the promotion of the glory of God and the Redeemers Kingdom are other formidable obstacles to the Saviour's coming. Some indeed cannot be zealous without noise and others think zeal consists in the neglect of prudence and discretion and running into every extravagance. But there is a zeal according to knowledge which it is warm is steady - while active it is prudent - while desirous of doing good does not forget its proper place - and while bold is yet modest and unobtrusive and such is the zeal I mean – a zeal so much wanted in the church of Christ. Think you that when he comes...

Delivered

At Conway April 1825

At Amherst West North Parish February 7 1828

At Amherst College April 6 1828

At Amherst West Parish February 7 1835

## Sermon 522 [Barriers to Salvation]

[I Corinthians 3:11, 1825 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 4]

I Corinthians 3:11

*Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

*[In the last few pages of this sermon Hitchcock presents a number of arguments proposed against belief in Christ. He calls them all false foundations.]*

Paul in this chapter represents himself as an architect who had been laying on or rather making known the foundation on which the salvation of man rested. Yet in one sense he was not the Master builder: for says he to the Corinthians in the context: *We are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building*. Still in another sense as the first apostle of the Gentiles – as one of the first preachers of the Gospel - he was a master builder - as he says in the next verse: *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon*. Although therefore God is the supreme architect not only of the natural but also of the moral world yet he had instructed the apostles by special revelation how to build the Church upon Jesus Christ the sure and tried cornerstone. But in what sense is Christ the foundation? Certainly in that sense in which he was preached by Paul: for Paul declares that he has laid the foundation. Christ is the sole foundation of salvation in that sense in which Paul understood him to be so: and in order to determine what Paul did believe and preach concerning Christ we must resort to his epistles. And here we find him resolving not to know anything among the Corinthians *save Jesus Christ and him crucified*. He determined also to glory in nothing save in the cross of this Saviour and says to the Corinthians that *he delivered unto them first of all how that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the scripture*. *We preach*, says he, *Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness: But unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*. Christ crucified therefore - Christ the atoning sacrifice for the sins of men - is the grand point in which he is the sole foundation of the sinner's hope. Hence as we might expect whenever the apostle speaks of the character of Christ he represents him as both God and man for it is idle to talk about an atonement made by any creature - however exalted and since the divine nature is incapable of suffering there must be a human soul united to it on which the arrows of wrath might fall while its union with the Godhead would give to those sufferings an infinite value. Hence Paul speaks of Christ as descending from the Jews according to his human nature but as to his divine nature he *is over all God blessed forever*. He also declares that in him dwelt all the fullness of the godhead bodily and says *great is the mystery of godliness - God was manifest in the flesh justified in the spirit seen of angels preached unto the gentiles believed on in the world received up into glory*.

It is Jesus Christ possessed of such a character and making a sin offering for man whom the apostle represents as the foundation of the Gospel. The doctrine of the text therefore is that the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only consistent possible mode in which God can save sinners. To every other method and many others have been proposed and confided in there exists

1. A barrier on the part of God
2. A barrier on the part of man

1. *A barrier on the part of God.* In whatever respects the different modes of salvation proposed by men may differ from one another they all agree in not requiring any satisfaction to the violated law of God. None of them make any exhibition of God's hatred of sin and love of holiness and atonement. They all proceed on the supposition that no such display of God's righteousness was necessary either to maintain the consistency of the divine character or to operate favorably upon the universe of moral beings. If any of these false systems acknowledge the fact that man is a sinner they suppose also that God can forgive sins without requiring any substitute for the penalty. Repentance alone can by no means be regarded as a substitute for this does not do away at all the injury done by the violation. And repentance is all that is required in any plan of salvation in which Christ is not included. All of these systems then agree in supposing God can pardon sin without an atonement: and this is their great deficiency. For it takes for granted that God will do what he cannot do consistently with his character. Of what use would have been a law if its penalty were not to be executed? If it could be dispensed with in any way other than by the suffering of a substitute which in some sense were equivalent to the punishment the criminal himself would receive if left to suffer the penalty. Such a law would lose all its force and be regarded by the subjects as a mass of wax easily molded into any desired shape: any such a lawgiver must lose all the respect of his subjects and be looked upon as changeable and irresolute. But such feelings can never exist in regard to Jehovah: for his holy law being a transcript of his character is like its author *without variableness or shadow of turning*. There must be either the rigid and unalleviated execution of the penalty or a substitute must be provided which will answer all the purposes of a literal fulfillment of the curse upon the transgressor. Rather than dishonor his cause rather than one jot or tittle of its sanctions should fail Jehovah would blot out of existence this whole created universe. It is an object in itself desirable that all men should be saved. But if their salvation must be purchased at the expense of one iota of the law it were better that all the human family should suffer interminably. For valuable as is the soul of man the law of God is vastly more so: for it is the chain that holds together the moral universe: and if a single link be removed that universe would burst asunder and become a chaos. There then is the insufferable barrier on the part of God to any other mode of salvation than that provided by the death of Jesus Christ. He cannot save man in any other way unless he dispense with the penalty or lower down the standard of his law. This would be to make a change in what infinite wisdom and justice and mercy have decided to be best: for the law was framed by one possessing these attributes and if any possible case could occur where any part of the law ought to be dispensed with or its requirements altered God must have foreseen it and provided for it but he has not done this and therefore no such case can exist. To suppose that after God had made and promulgated his law before the universe he should dispense with its penalty for the sake of saving man supposes that he is a changeable Being like human sovereigns who make a law to deny and repeal or alter it tomorrow because they can amend it. This would imply that God is destitute of the wisdom necessary to make a law perfect at first and in fact reduces him altogether to such a one as ourselves. Besides for God to dispense with one iota of his law would be to put the safety and happiness of the whole universe in jeopardy and expose the ten thousand times ten thousand beings that surround his throne to sin and misery. And it would also bring upon his character suspicion and expose him to the contempt of the creatures he has made. When God therefore is willing to have the universe laid open to the inroads of sin and misery and to expose his creatures to interminable woes - when he is willing to have his character appear in the eyes of angels and men weak fickle and contemptible and to have his authority despised - in short when he is willing to ruin the universe to degrade himself and consult the good of a few at the expense of the good of many - then but not till then can he save sinners in some other way than through Jesus Christ. To expect salvation in any other way therefore is the height of

presumption and when we come to look upon the cross of Christ as foolishness we may be assured that there stands between us and heaven a barrier absolutely impassible until that cross appear to us the wisdom of God and the power of God. God will see heaven and earth passing away - he will see the whole race of men sink into everlasting destruction nay he will bury in one mighty ruin this lost universe with all its inhabitants holy and unholy before he will violate or alter or lower down one jot or tittle his law - before he will suffer this barrier on his part to be broken down. It rises high as his throne it sinks as deep as hell and there is written in letters of adamant upon its face, *other foundations can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ.*

2. But secondly other mode of saving sinners than by the cross of Christ there is a barrier on the part of man. You may if you please suppose the barrier on God's part to be taken out of the way: still there stands one invincible on the part of man. The object to be accomplished is not merely to satisfy and make honorable the laws and indicate the character of God in devising a plan of salvation - not merely to show how God can be just while justifies the sinner - but how to reconcile that sinner's heart to the character of government of Jehovah is another point of supreme importance. His heart is in a state of alienation and all its affections are turned away from God and fastened upon forbidden objects. But in order to salvation - in order to be made happy in heaven it must imagine acquire a relish for holiness on earth - since nothing but holiness will enter heaven - and therefore he who goes there cannot be happy without a relish for it. His affections must be disengaged from the world and fastened upon religion. But how shall such an entire revolution of feeling and affection be effected? It can be produced in no other way but by the cross of Jesus Christ. This and this alone is the charm that has the power to dissolve the frozen heart of selfishness and to warm and expand it with universal benevolence with love to God and love to man. There is no evidence that anything on earth besides the cross of Christ is ever produced that change in the heart of man necessary to fit it for heaven. I speak here of Christian lands not wishing to bring into view the case of the heathen. Many men who have sought salvation without the cross of Christ have been moral and amiable - lovers of good order - promoters of worthy objects persons of high and honorable feelings towards others and even supporters of religious institutions. But there is no proof that any such person who did not place all his hopes of salvation in the cross of Christ ever possessed real genuine devoted piety. On the other hand such persons have given decided evidence to those most intimate with them that their supreme affections had never been transferred from the world to God. They have had no just views of sin or their own sinfulness no just views of the strictness and extent of the law of God - no just views of his holiness and and justice - and they have not made the glory of God the grand leading motive of their actions. They have not been persons of prayer nor humility of heart nor have they appeared to possess that relish for spiritual and holy objects without which they cannot be happy in heaven.

But on the other hand there is abundant proof that the natural enmity of man's heart has been dissolved by the cross in thousands of instances. Multitudes of every age rank and condition have dated the commencement of their love of holiness and hatred of sin - their first holy motives and deeds - their first real humility - their first correct views of themselves and of the law of God - from the moment in which they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a view of a crucified Saviour that so suddenly transformed the persecuting Saul of Tarsus into the kindly devoted and ever active apostle Paul and he testifies that it was by the same cross that the enmity of the hearts of men in apostolick times was slain. And such has been the testimony of every succeeding individual who has given evidence by a life the most active and devoted obedience and beneficence that the love of God and man warmed his bosom. The inscription upon the tombstone of Howard, *Christ is my hope*, might well be written upon the monument of them all. Not that the cross of Christ is seen with the cold and uninterested eye of worldliness or speculation will produce this wonderful effect. For it is only when the subduing power of

the Spirit of God turns the sinner's heart to a crucified Saviour that it is melted and made to adore and love. But the cross is the grand instrument by which the Spirit accomplishes all the works of regeneration. In that cross is such a high display of God's benevolence – there justice and mercy meet together in such beautiful harmony there is exhibited such an awful manifestation of the horrid nature and consequences of sin – and there is such a stooping down of the godhead and such a kind and endearing vision of divinity and humanity that the heart - obdurate and desperately wicked as it is - is overcome and drawn towards God and the Redeemer in love and praise. And it is because men do not see the glory and beauty that shines in the cross of Christ brighter than the Urim and Thummim on the breastplate of the high priest - that no more of them are made to bow to the Saviour and to love the divine character. Sin prevents them seeing any form or comeliness in the Saviour until the Holy Spirit takes away the veil and from the bright and lovely light of the picture upon their darkened souls.

In that hour they feel their enmity dissolving like the snow of winter before the breezes of spring and the warm streams of benevolence flow through their hearts. Until they do thus view the bleeding cross the barrier that exists in their hearts to their salvation will stand unmovable. They may as easily create a world as to remove it in any other way. Multitudes have wearied themselves all their lives to attain heaven without the cross of Jesus Christ: but alas they have laboured in vain – the enmity of their hearts never has been slain and they have carried it with them into eternity forever to mourn that *They went about to establish their own righteousness and would not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.*

A few remarks will close.

And first this subject sweeps away a host of delusions that are hurrying men to perdition. I see men of different religious says one evidently sincere and conscientious in the belief and doctrines and the practice of duties dramatically opposed to one another and although they differ as much as possible in their belief yet I see so much in their lives that is moral and amiable that I cannot believe a just God will cast them off. But the question according to this subject is not whether men are sincere: but whether they are building on the foundation of Jesus Christ crucified and atoning for sin - whether they believe in him not whether they are conscientious in their errors - *For other foundations etc.* I cannot believe says another that a benevolent God will punish man eternally for the sins they commit in this short life amid so many temptations. But according to this subject we are not to enquire about what the justice and goodness of God will do but whether such persons savingly believe in an atoning Saviour. I find great and good men differing about the doctrines of the gospel even about the atonement: and I feel myself incapable of deciding who is right and who is wrong but I am certain that I am conscientious and sincerely desirous to know the truth and I do not fear a merciful God will require anything more of a frail and ignorant man. But if this subject be true he does require a belief in a crucified Saviour: *For other foundations etc.* I have long been seeking and striving and praying to be led into the truth says another and to obtain true religion and how can punish one forever who has made all the efforts in his power even if he never experiences a changed heart. But according to this subject the enquiry is not how much a man has done to obtain religion but whether he is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. It appears to me unreasonable says another that an immortal being should suffer for the guilty and how can I believe in an atonement until convinced that it is not an absurdity. But the cross was foolishness to the Jews and the Greeks in ancient times as well as for this person: and it was foolishness to those that perish. *Other foundations etc.* It is of little consequence says another what is a man's creed if his life be correct - *For works of faith, etc.* But if this subject be true - if the bible be true – then *he that believeth not shall be damned - nay he is condemned already.* I acknowledge says another that I must depend in part upon the Saviour for

justification: but if my own works have no influence in justification then I cannot see why I should perform any. But this is a foundation made up partly of Christ partly of our own goodness and if the text be true *Other foundation, etc.* it is a false foundation.

Secondly this subject leads us solemnly to enquire on what foundation are building. To determine this point we have only to ask ourselves whether we cordially and unreservedly upon Jesus Christ for salvation. That is whether we have ever exercised saving faith in him. If not we are relying upon some other foundation. And how many alas are there who are in this condition and how alarming their situation. They mean to enter heaven by a way which God has barred up and guarded by a double flaming sword. Until they come to Jesus there is no hope for them - no possible chance for escaping eternal misery – Oh deluded souls! Why will you build upon a foundation of sand! Why will you longer refuse to rely on him who died for you - *on the chief cornerstone laid in Zion elect and precious!* It is unbelief – secret criminal unbelief - that is ruing you: and it is pride and the love of the world that feed that unbelief. Doubt if you please about things of less importance: but to doubt on this subject is madness – to disbelieve is damnation.

Delivered

At Conway May 1825

At Amherst East Parish July 1828

At Amherst College August 16 1828

At Amherst College December 1834

At Amherst College November 1840

At Amherst West Parish November 1835

At Sunderland September 1836

At Northampton January 1839

At Deerfield September 1840

At Amherst College February 1846

At Amherst College January 11 1853

At Deerfield December 1857

At South Deerfield December 1857

## Sermon 523 Exposition of Romans Ninth Chapter

[Exposition of Romans Ch. 9, 1825 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 4]

*[This sermon includes a very thorough discussion of election and its problems, especially in the last 4-5 paragraphs.]*

It is a remark of Dr. Doddridge that that sense of the scripture which a plain and honest man of good common sense yet unlettered receives from reading it carefully is most usually the true sense. There are some exceptions in regard to particular passages and verses: but in general this remark will be found true and indeed such we should expect would be the case if the bible was written for the great mass of mankind and not for the learned only.

In the examination of the chapter under consideration I hope this simple rule of interpreting scripture will be kept in mind and applied. For such violent efforts have been made probably with few other parts of the bible to avoid its plain and obvious meaning. It would be idle for me at this time to take into consideration all the learned conjectures and fine spun systems that have been formed on this chapter. Believing as I do that the plain and obvious meaning is the true one I am willing to risk the application of Dr. Doddridge's remarks to it not fearing but it will lead many hearers to right apprehensions. It ought to be borne in mind however that the subjects Paul here discusses are such as meet with a strong opposition in all our hearts and therefore we need to be peculiarly on our guard against prejudice and not to trust our own impartiality and honesty but to lift up our prayers to him from whom cometh heavenly wisdom and humility to bestow them upon us at this time.

In the preceding chapters Paul had said many things extremely cutting to the Jewish people his countrymen who had not embraced a Saviour. He had represented contrary to their strongest prejudices that God were no respecter of persons and that by nature the Jews were alike desperately wicked with the Gentiles. And the Jews might be led to suppose that he took pleasure in mortifying them and that he hated them because they did not like him embrace the Messiah. He accordingly commences this chapter with the strongest of all possible asseverations or oaths to the contrary.

Verses 1 - 2 - 3.

*I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*

It has been thought by some that Paul in the third verse expressed a willingness and a desire to be eternally miserable provided he could thus save his brethren and hence it is inferred that all men who would become children of God must exercise a like unreserved submission. The passage is undoubtedly the strongest the bible furnishes in support of such an opinion. I suppose however the meaning of the verse to be that Paul wishes he might be made a curse after the example of Christ - or as Christ was and



suffer as he suffered and if this would be the means of saving his brethren: such a construction the passage will bear and it seems most consonant with reason and the tenor of scripture.

Have we any such sorrow as Paul had for our friends who do not believe on the Saviour!

Paul proceeds to enumerate some of the most distinguished privileges enjoyed by the Jews that rendered them dear to him.

#### Verses 4 and 5.

*Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

They were the descendants of that illustrious patriarch Israel on whose account a blessing rested upon them - they were adopted by God and called his sons and daughters - the glory of God was for a long time visibly made manifest among them in the shechinah on the mercy seat of the holy of holies - with them through Abraham and Moses did God enter into covenants that embraced all the ends of the earth - through them was the moral law given to the world and also the ceremonial law given to themselves to point out an exact ritual for the service of God - and to them were peculiarly rich promises given. It is among the Jews also that we find the most illustrious and pious fathers or ancestors and above all Jesus Christ himself - according to the flesh - or in his human nature was a Jew although he is the supreme God blessed forever. How then could Paul avoid having the most earnest desire for the salvation of such people!

The fifth verse is one of the cleanest and most undoubted passages to be found in the bible in proof of the divinity of Christ - *of whom as concerning the flesh*, etc. Here Paul expressly declares that Christ is God over all or the Supreme God - and all the efforts of the most acute and sceptical criticism has not been able to alter the meaning of the passage in any other way but by unfounded conjecture. The human as well as divine nature of Christ is likewise taught in this passage. Paul here says that Christ concerning the flesh descended from the Jews: now what can the expression *concerning the flesh* mean but the human nature of Christ - and how very proper to make this distinction if he really be over all God blessed forever: but if he be not why say any thing about *concerning the flesh*. If Christ possessed but one simple nature why inform us that he descended from the Jews according to his human nature when it could be no other nature. The sacred writers are not guilty of such folly as this. Indeed it is scarcely possible to express more clearly the doctrine of a divine and a human nature in Christ than is done in this verse: and were there are no other passages in the scripture on the subject this one would settle the question forever. Well might the apostle close such an important declaration by a solemn *amen* - thus affixing to it the seal of eternal truth - and calling on us to pause and meditate upon a declaration so grand and glorious. May we ever have hearts to repeat this amen and to honour the Son as we honour the Father.

Paul however in this representing the great body of the Jewish nation as rejected of God because they rejected the Saviour would not be understood to say that all were cast off and that God's word had not been the instrument of saving any.

Read verse 6.

Verse 6.

*Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.  
For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:*

Not all who descended from Israel by natural generation are on that account members of the true Israel or of the church and the same holds there now - not all the members of the visible church are therefore members of the invisible.

Verses 7 and 8.

*Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

God made a distinction between the children of Abraham - having made choice of Isaac to be the father of the Jews and in him blessed all his seed - but on Ishmael a much older child of Abraham no such blessing was conferred. It did not then prove that men were entitled to the peculiar privileges of God's chosen people because they were the natural descendants of Abraham nor could he prove anyone to be a child of God because he was nominally a Jew. These things depended on the sovereign appointment of God. To show that the original separation of the Jews from other nations to be a peculiar people to the Lord was entirely a sovereign act of Jehovah Paul quotes the original words of the promise. He adds also another example - that of Jacob and Esau the grandchildren of Abraham.

Verses 9 - 10 - 11 - 12 - 13.

*For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

Many have supposed that the apostle in these verses clearly teaches the doctrine of individual election to eternal life. The absolute sovereignty of God is indeed here expressed in the clearest manner: but in this particular instance the election spoken of is clearly confined to the present world. It is an election to

temporal privileges and not to eternal glory: for such only was obviously the import of the blessing of praise pronounced on Jacob - and the loss of these blessings was obviously the curse pronounced upon Isaac. Yet an election to temporal privileges amounts in the end to nearly the same thing so far as the principle is concerned as an election to eternal life for we have no evidence that any deprived of the privilege of knowing God's revealed will are ever fitted for heaven. And furthermore the principle by which God through his mere good pleasure bestows peculiar favours on one nation and withholds them from another is precisely the same as that by which he chooses some to everlasting life and leaves others to perish in their sins. And it is to illustrate and prove this general principle of the divine administration that Paul produces the various instances of election mentioned in this chapter as we shall see by reading a few verses farther. But first he introduces an error and answers an objection to the view he had taken of the case of Esau and Jacob -

Verse 14.

*What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.*

He does not stop formally to disprove this objection - the same that is made at this day - but he rejects it with indignation as utterly impossible as obviously contrary to all our ideas of the attributes of Jehovah and though we might not be able to reconcile the facts of the subject still it would be madness to reject them on this account as untrue. For this principle of God's government - had been claimed and asserted so long ago as the days of Moses.

Verse 15.

*For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,  
and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

The apostle now brings forward in more distinct language the conclusion or general principle of the divine administration he had been trying to prove by an apparent appeal to particular instances.

Verse 16.

*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth,  
but of God that sheweth mercy.*

The meaning of this verse most evidently is that neither the will nor efforts of men are the grounds on which God bestows his favours - but that ground is the sovereign will of God. In other words he does not have mercy on man because they desire mercy or because they seek to attain it but strictly according to his own free will and pleasure. Another instance in supporting this declaration occurs to the apostle's mind.

## Verse 17.

*For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*

Paul now repeats over in other language the general principle he had been proving so that if possible he might prevent men from misunderstanding it.

## Verse 18.

*Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy,  
and whom he will he hardeneth.*

Here then we have one of the grand and general principles that regulate the divine conduct towards men. By what rule of logic then I ask shall we limit the language of the apostle to the case of nations and refrain to extend it to individuals? Most of the instances addressed to establish the principle do indeed refer only to national and temporal privileges - but these are as good as any other to prove the general truth aimed at. And besides what was the declaratory with which the apostle started which he proceeded to illustrate - that *they are not all Israel which are of Israel*. In other words there is a distinction among men as it respects their preparation for heaven - some being prepared - belonging to the true Israel and some being destitute of preparation - and this distinction he endeavours to show results solely from the sovereign mercy of Jehovah. It is absurd to suppose the apostle in this passage meant to prove nothing except that there existed a distinction between the Jewish and other nations: for he well knew and often maintained in the face of the most violent opposition that this national distinction was abolished by the coming of the Messiah: and besides the Jews gloried in the national distinction and it was wholly unnecessary to prove it to them. Furthermore the distinction maintained by the apostle was one that greatly offended the Jews as appears from the objections introduced, but this could not be a rational distinction for this was pleasing to their whole hearts. It must therefore have been the distinction between the tribe and the professed Israel - between real saints and those saints only by profession. If Paul intended to express merely the manner in which God deals with nations why are his expressions so unlimited and embracing individuals as well as nations - and why is anything said about the true and the false Israel? These various circumstances show beyond any reasonable doubt that the apostle in this chapter is establishing a general principle of God's dealing with men and if so that principle extends to final salvation and perdition as well as anything else: and in regard to everything temporal and eternal, *he has mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth*.

Not having time to finish this chapter this morning I close the former part of it with a few remarks.

And first men need a large share of grace to read this chapter with profit. It aims such a terrible blow at human pride and sufficiency and places us so entirely in the hands of a sovereign God that none but the really humble in heart can receive these truths without a rising or murmuring of the feelings. Nay whose

experience does not testify that he found so strong an opposition to this chapter while in an unrenewed state that he could not examine it with impartiality? How many decide beforehand that the doctrine of decrees on election cannot possibly be true and then read this chapter only to find out how they can evade the truths it contains! It is therefore highly important my hearers that we pray earnestly to God when reading this portion of his word that our prejudices may be subdued and that we may understand and receive its true meaning. Unless our hearts are in such a state that they can offer up such prayers I have no hope judging from my own past experience that we shall ever cordially receive the doctrines taught in this chapter.

Secondly from this chapter we learn that the doctrine of divine sovereignty or election may very readily be understood. Many content themselves by saying that this is a mysterious doctrine which we cannot understand and therefore we wish to let it alone. But what is there about it so difficult? What can be plainer than the simple statement made by Paul in this chapter that *God has mercy on etc.* Here is a simple statement of a fact that there is no more difficulty in understanding it than there is in attaining the meaning of this declaration - the President of the United States appoints whom he pleases to be ambassador at foreign courts and passes by whom he will. But you say how can this doctrine be reconciled with the free agency of man and with the justice and goodness of God? The difficulty does not lie therein in understanding the doctrine but in reconciling with other known truths: and here I acknowledge there is enough of mystery and difficulty to occupy the minds of men and angels through all eternity in unravelling.

But if the simple statement of the doctrine were unintelligible how would men know whether it were contrary to reason and common sense and the free agency of man and the use of means and the like. The truth is we can understand the doctrine well enough that we cannot explain it. The bible does not attempt an explanation. But it states the doctrine in the clearest manner and if we refuse to believe it because we cannot reconcile it with other things although it rests on the authority of God himself we set up our understanding in opposition to the wisdom of Jehovah. And neither to believe nor disbelieve it because we cannot explain all its connections is to refuse to give credit to the testimony of God.

Thirdly how exactly do facts agree with the doctrine of divine sovereignty as taught in this chapter! How very various the condition of nations in regard to national civil intellectual and religious favours! And most of these distinctions depending on causes utterly beyond the power of the present race to remove or to have prevented. No less various is the condition of individuals in different nations and even in the same nation. One is born to affluence another to poverty – one to uninterrupted health another to unalleviated sickness - one in the mind of civilization and learning and refinement another surrounded by ignorance and barbarism and vulgarity. One is brought up by religious parents another by sceptics and abandoned one. And more than all the rest one becomes pious and happy in the favour of God while others in the same society - the same neighbourhood and even in the same family remain hardened and impenitent. Nay sometimes one who has had no religious instruction and has lived as careless and indifferent to religion as anyone can is suddenly arrested converted connected and made to advance in holiness to the end of life while another moral and amiable and professedly seeking religion year after year and instructed by pious parents lives and dies without God and without hope. Now there is nothing but the doctrine of this chapter that can explain such differences among men as these. Do you say one man is converted because he yields up his heart to God and another remains unconverted because he refuses his affections to his maker? This is true: but it only removes the difficulty a little farther back. But why did God subdue the heart of the one and not of the other since in the state of nature both were children of wrath and the one no more desirable in his sight than the other! The only reason that can be given is that *he hath mercy etc.*

Finally this chapter contains a powerful motive to immediate repentance. What is the strongest evidence that we are among those whom God has hardened? I answer a continuance in a state of security and indifference about our preparation for eternity. The only way then to prove that we are not among that sad number is to receive immediate repentance. Until we do this we give conclusive proof that we are abandoned of God - the moment we repent we give certain evidence to the contrary. Do you say that according to the doctrine of this chapter it cannot alter the case at all whether you repent or not since all depends on God's will? But his revealed not his secret will is the rule we are to follow - and his revealed will is *God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*

Delivered

At Conway May 1825

## Sermon 524 Exposition of Romans X Chapter

[Exposition of Romans Ch. 10, 1825 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 4]

Paul knew that the distinguishing views of Gospel truth he had exhibited in this epistle especially in the 9th Chap. would be most offensive to the unconverted Israelites and lead them to regard him as their enemy because he told them the truth. Repeatedly therefore does he testify that the desire of his heart was for their salvation. He began his ninth chapter in this manner and he repeats the same in the commencement of the tenth.

### Verse 1.

*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

The difficulty with the Jews was that they had false views of religious truth.

### Verse 2.

*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

This verse shows us that a correct doctrinal faith is necessary to render a man's zeal acceptable to God. No matter how ardent and zealous men are to disseminate what they call religion if it do not agree with the bible - if they are wanting in any of the fundamental truths of the gospel. A man cannot be too zealous to promote true religion - to save the souls of his fellow men. But he ought to be sure that his zeal is according to knowledge. The religious man, however although zealous in worldly things even to enthusiasm is unwilling any zeal should be exhibited in religion. The self righteous Pharisee though ready to persecute those who endeavour to save souls has no zeal for any thing but for his errors. And multitudes there are who are all zeal for religion so long as they can take a lead in plans for promoting it: but whose zeal dies as soon as they are brought to labour in a subordinate capacity. The moment they cease to be distinguished their zeal expires because the love of a name was the grand motive of it. So there are multitudes who are unboundedly ardent to proselyte men to their particular denomination but whose zeal would be altogether extinguished if they could make men nothing more than Christians. Their object is to make men Presbyterians or Baptists or Methodists or Episcopalians not to make them christians. But very different from this is the zeal that is according to knowledge.

*[Zeal] has attained its highest aim,  
Its end is satisfy'd.  
If sinners love the Saviour's name;  
Nor seeks it ought beside.*

*But self, however well employ'd,  
Has its own ends in view;  
And says, as boasting Jehu cry'd,  
Come see what I can do.*

*[Source: Hymn by Isaac Watts, 1819]*

The particular point in which the zeal of the Israelites was defective and contrary to knowledge was in seeking justification by the works of the law and in refusing to yield to the righteousness of Christ.

### Verse 3

*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

This has been the grand stumbling block of men in every age. They are zealous to establish their own righteousness that is to show that their own good deeds are sufficient to recommend them to God and to prevent them from perishing in another world. Much more zeal has been shown in establishing such a mode of salvation than in establishing salvation by the blood of Christ. But it is a zeal for promoting men's destruction not their salvation: *for by deeds of the law shall no flesh living be satisfied*. The man therefore who seeks justification by depending at all on his own righteousness has a zeal destitute of knowledge: he has no correct knowledge of himself nor of God nor of the law nor of Christ. And yet such is the pride of these self righteous men that their eyes are blinded to their ignorance. Of all the sins that beset man a zeal for self righteousness is one that cheats them most and is most concealed and most dangerous. It is a secret leaven that poisons the fountain and communicates moral death to the whole system. It is the grand barrier that lies between God and man - the grand stumbling block over which immense multitudes plunge into perdition. Pride unsubdued unperceived self righteous pride is the giant defender of the natural heart against salvation by the cross. It throws over that method of saving men the aspect of foolishness and effectually bars up every avenue to conviction. Hence it is that many a formal moralist many a strict self righteous legalist loses his soul while the abandoned outcast the far gone sinner repents and bows to the righteousness of a Saviour. There is no sin that so endangers the soul none more offensive in the sight of God than a secret self conceited pride that is zealous for its own dignity but despises the cross of Christ. A man under its influence looks upon all humble zeal for religion as enthusiastic phrenzy. He calls the devoted servants of Jesus deluded fanatics or weak unfortunate men and does not know that there exists in his heart a hostility to God and religion that will destroy him unless God have mercy on him and subdue him to the righteousness of Christ. For as the apostle says,

### Verse 4.

*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*



What is it is the great end and scope of the law to lead men to Christ's righteousness for justification. By its strictness it showed men if they would look at it in its true light that it was impossible for them to attain to salvation on the ground of law. For says Paul

Verse 5.

*For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,  
That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*

In other words it is only the man who doeth all the law requires – who practises a sinless obedience that can be saved through it. And therefore no man can thus be saved since all have sinned. But the righteousness of faith which the apostle preached might be described by using the words of Moses with reference to another subject.

Verses 6,7,8,9, 10 and 11.

*But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

The sinner who was convinced of his sin and humbled to see his need of an atonement was under no necessity to ascend into heaven or descend into the world of departed spirits in search of Christ or the Messiah for the Saviour was nigh him continually ready to hear his prayer and to save him. Nay the word of faith was in the heart and the mouth of every believer. And if anyone really believed in his heart that God had raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and confessed him with his lips he would be saved.

It is important for all who indulge hope that they are Christians but have never confessed Christ before men to observe how intimately a profession of religion is here joined with the possession of it. Nay there is no promise of salvation without such a profession. The apostle seems to consider the test by which to show whether a man's hope was built on the right foundation. No matter what were the man's feelings in regard to himself - no matter how strong his confidence in his good estate - if he shrunk from talk taking up the cross of a professor of his Saviour before the world it showed that his faith and hope were not of the genuine kind. And if Paul considers this a necessary test of Christian character in those days when to profess Christ was to expose one to the severest persecution and suffering - what must those at the present think of their hope who while they expect to join the communion table in heaven cannot join it on earth - but shrink from the comparatively light cross such a profession would now bring along with it. If the fear of man – if the fear of apostizing prevents us from a profession of religion at this day

what would they have done in the days of Paul? *If thou hast run with footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustiest, they wearied thee, how then wilt thou do in the swelling of the Jordan?*

From the 10th verse (*with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*) it is very plain that a man's understanding may be most firmly convinced of the truth of the gospel and yet unless his heart yield to the truth he has not saving faith. Hence the propriety of making a distinction between speculative and saving faith - the distinction sometimes regarded as imaginary.

Do our hearts go along with our understandings in the belief of the gospel? If they do then our lives also correspond.

A there is no difference among men in regard to the mode of justification so there is none in respect to their acceptance if they believe.

#### Verses 12 and 13.

*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

The expression in this verse, *whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*, deserves a moment's consideration. It is agreed by the best writers that to call on the name of the Lord is the same as to invoke the name of the Lord and this is the same as to pray to the Lord. But who is the Lord spoken of in this text as an object of worship – as a hearer of prayer? Undoubtedly it is Christ. It is the same on whom man are said to believe in the 11th verse and he is called in the 12<sup>th</sup> verse Lord over all or universal Lord. Here then is an example in which we are exhorted to pray to or invoke Christ as Lord over all and as able to bestow on us salvation. The same case we have in many other places. In Corinthians Paul addresses himself to those who call upon or invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place. Here all Christians in every place are described as those who pray to Christ. Annanias also describes Christians in the same way when he speaks of Paul how he had a commission to bind all who call upon thy name - that is pray to Christ. Even the heathen writers sometimes describe Christians in the same way. They are accustomed says Pliny in his letter to Trajan to sing an hymn to Christ as if he were a God.

What a gracious promise does the 13<sup>th</sup> verse present! *Whosoever shall call, etc.* In other words he who worships God with a right state of heart is sure of salvation. Do we thus invoke him? But

#### Verses 14 and 15.

*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach,*

*except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

If any do not believe Christ to be an object of worship how shall they invoke him or pray to him: for it would be to them an act of idolatry. Especially how shall those call upon him who have never heard him and how will they ever hear unless a preacher be sent to them.

What a conclusive argument does the apostle here offer in favour of missions to the heathen! For it is evidently concerning the heathen that he here speaks: since the Jews had heard of a Saviour. And not only does he speak in favour of missions generally but in favour of systematic efforts to convert the heathen. It seems that regular ministers must be raised up whose sole business it is to preach the gospel and be sent to the dark places of the earth. And in order to do this there must be systematic and charitable efforts to prepare such persons for their work. The objections then which are made to missions at this day which are conducted on this plan be equally strong against what Paul here recommends.

The hands and feet of those messengers who came with good news or upon kind design were in former times presented as beautiful. Hence although the ministers of the gospel can claim no superior external beauty yet the gospel they bring is emphatically good news for it discloses a way by which a guilty and a lost world may be reconciled to God. But alas! To what multitudes does it prove a savour of death! By what multitudes are the most faithful ministers looked upon with an evil eye - regarded as hypocritical hirelings - the messengers of terror and not of peace! So it was in the days of Isaiah - so it was in the days of Paul - so it still is.

Verse 16.

*But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

How often are the ministers of the Gospel compelled to take up this melancholy lamentation of Isaiah! It is a complaint that he who addresses you has great and almost continual cause for making. Thanks be to God that his acceptance with his Master does not depend upon the degrees of the success of his labour.

It appears then that faith in Christ comes by hearing about him from those who preach the word of God. This is Paul's conclusion.

Verse 17.

*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

But could the Jews plead that they had not heard the Gospel? *Have they not heard*, says Paul in the 18th verse? He answers by using the language of David in reference to the heavenly bodies and applying it to the Gospel.

Verse 18, last part.

*But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth,  
and their words unto the ends of the world.*

This may seem an exaggerated account of the spread of the gospel in that early day: but history bears out the assertion of this apostle. So zealously and rapidly did the first missionaries of the cross fly from land to land that they penetrated in a very few years to the utmost parts of the known world. And Paul now attempts to show that the Jews knew or might have known that the gospel would spread thus rapidly and that their privileges would be taken from them and given to those whom they despised. Even Moses had predicted how God would excite their jealousy and rage by bestowing peculiar privileges and favours upon other nations.

Verses 19, 20 and 21.

*But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

Alas! Alas! It is thus the Saviour has been requited in every age. Men answer his kind invitations by sullen contempt or vain cavils or stupid indifference. We who preach that Saviour have our hearts and our patience tried beyond measure by the strange and unaccountable neglect with which treat the message of the Saviour we bring. All our expectations and warnings and reasonings are answered by a sneer or a cavil or by a stupid unconcern and the Saviour is treated in such a manner as men would not dare to treat their fellow men. There is as much disposition in the world to crucify the Saviour now as there was 1800 years ago. There is as much of unbelief in him now as there was then. It is still to a disobedient and gainsaying people that he stretches out his hand.

*My God, I feel the mournful scene;  
My spirit yearns o'er dying men;  
And fain my pity would reclaim  
And snatch the firebrands from the flame.*

*But feeble my compassion proves,  
And can but weep where most it loves:  
Thine own all-saving arm employ,  
And turn these drops of grief to Joy. [Source: Hymn by Phillip Doddridge, 1739]*

Delivered

At Conway May 1825

## Sermon 525 [Weep Not for Me]

[Luke 23:28 (Weep Not for Me) May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 4]

Luke 23:28

*Weep not for me but weep for yourselves and for your children.*

*[This is just a fragment of the original sermon. See the published version, Sermon 536.]*

If ever there was an object that could not fail to draw forth tears from the eyes of the good man it was our Saviour as his enemies were leading him away innocent and helpless to the place of crucifixion. Such are the sympathies of the human heart that compassion is excited in favour of the man whose guilt we do not doubt if we see him in the hands of the executioner fettered for the cross, the axe, guillotine or the scaffold. When the disciples of Christ therefore who were bound to him by a thousand tender ties saw their Master whose life they knew was spotless - and whose heart was benevolence itself - when they saw him led away to execution and observed the indignities he suffered and the painful death that was before him, Oh their bosoms must have been agonized even to bursting. And especially if those disciples were females - with feelings naturally more tender and with habits more calculated to refine and quicken their sensibilities we should suppose the scene must have been almost insupportable. Yet it was under such circumstances and to the female disciples that the Saviour said as in the text, *Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me but weep for yourselves and for your children*. Christ had in his eye the peculiarly severe woes that were shortly coming upon devoted Jerusalem and he knew how mere he was...

Delivered

At Conway May 1825

At Patrick Swamp September 1826

At Amherst East Parish September 1834

At Amherst East Parish March 1842

At Amherst North Parish November 1837

At Amherst College July 25 1847

At Amherst West Parish May 1854

At Amherst College September 1854

## Sermon 526 Exposition of Romans XI Chapter

[Exposition of Romans Ch. 11, 1825 Jun,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 5]

It has been a complaint against those who have faithfully preached the gospel in every age that they consigned over most men to destruction. Because they have represented the way to destruction to be broad and many travellers upon it while the way of life is narrow and few there be that find it - because they have described many as searching but not finding and because they have masked out the great difficulties in the Christian course they have been thought to pass upon mankind generally the sentence of reprobation. Such was the feeling of the Jews as appears from the commencement of this chapter after what the apostle had been saying of their wickedness. He endeavours in the first part of this chapter to divest them of this impression.

Verses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

*I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

Some have escaped admitting the doctrine of election as stated in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans by supposing the apostle meant national election to temporal privileges and not an individual election to eternal life. But here he speaks of God's having elected or chosen certain individuals of the Jewish nation and made them saints. Others also though they acknowledge that the doctrine of election be true in a certain sense supposed that God elects such only as he foresees will perform good works and that their good works are the reason that leads him to elect them to life. But the apostle in the next verse settles this point beyond all reasonable dispute. After stating that even among the Jews at that corrupt period there was a remnant of believers according to the election of grace he proceeds.

Verse 6.

*And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

In other words if works have the least degree of influence in this election then it could not be by grace

or unmerited favour: for a reward bestowed in consequence of works has the nature of a debt and therefore takes away the idea of pure grace. Salvation in order to be called salvation by grace must be altogether and exclusively the result of mere unmerited mercy. And salvation in order to be properly called salvation by works must be altogether and exclusively the result of works. The two things could not be mixed together in the least without destroying their character. Grace would not be grace if works were united with it as a worldly cause of the divine beneficence and works would not be works if grace were united with it. The election of grace therefore rests altogether upon the free sovereign mercy of God without the least influence from works. *There is something so absolutely inconsistent between being saved by grace and by works, says Doddridge, that if you lay down either you do of necessity exclude the other from being the cause of it.*

Paul proceeds still farther to illustrate the doctrines of election and reprobation as it relates to the Jews.

#### Verses 7, 8, 9 and 10.

*What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.*

God is said to blind or harden man when he takes away from them his restraints and permits them to act out the wickedness of their hearts. There is no need of supposing a positive influence exerted upon those he blinds. For all of us if left to ourselves would soon become as blind as the blindest and as hard as the hardest.

The 7th verse teaches us conclusively that the hope of the Christian for perseverance must rest not on his own efforts but on the sovereign electing grace of God. For what persons could ever do more than the Jews by their external strictness to attain justification by their works. But the apostle here says, *Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh after. Yet the election had obtained it.* That is those who were elected had been brought into a state of favour and their perseverance was secured by Jehovah. Here was the ground of their hope - what other source can any believer look to for salvation?

The description of the abandonment of the great body of the Jewish nation given in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> verses is in a high degree alarming to impenitent men and awful to all. It is a dreadful sight to see an immortal soul given up to the uncontrolled dominion of sin and steadily rapidly ripening for eternal woe. Yet how constantly exposed to such abandonment are those who live in a state of impenitence. They are continually approaching that state in which God will say, *let them alone: they are joined to their idols.* Let such read their danger and their doom in the case of lost Israel: and let them no longer trifle with the warnings they receive.

#### Verse 11.



*I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid:  
but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles,  
for to provoke them to jealousy.*

The meaning is have the Jewish nation so stumbled that they will never rise? God forbid - prophecy assures us they will ultimately be restored. The present fall is the means of sending the gospel to the gentiles and its reception by the gentiles will be the means in future ages of exerting a holy emulation among the Jews to enjoy the same blessings. Their recovery too will have a happy influence on the gentiles.

Verse 12.

*Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them  
the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?*

As their rejection was made the instrument of communicating the gospel more rapidly to the gentiles: so their final restoration by affording such a glorious display of the power of truth and the fulfillment of prophecy will be made a much more powerful means of convincing and converting the heathen.

Verses 13 and 14.

*For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.*

As Paul was the apostle of the gentiles he wished to show that his office was a dignified and important one although he had been vilified for it. Yet at the same time he hoped to excite to a holy emulation his brethren the Jews and if the great body of them must be cast off he hoped thus to save some who are designated to salvation by the election of grace.

Verse 15.

*For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world,  
what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*

The 15<sup>th</sup> verse contains essentially the same meaning as the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. (Read it) If the casting away of the Jews be the reconciling of so great a part of the heathen world what shall their final restoration be but life from the dead to all mankind?

In the following verse the apostle speaks of relative not personal holiness - that is of an outward consecration to God.

Verse 16.

*For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy:  
and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*

The first fruits of the dough being presented to God according to the ceremonial laws sanctified or made holy the whole loaf and so it was with the root and branches. The patriarchs were the first fruits of Israel being chosen and set apart or made holy to the Lord and their seed after them. In several subsequent verses the apostle pursues the similitude of a tree and its branches. Abraham was the ruler of the visible church in all ages. Some of his branches were indeed broken off as Ishmael and Esau. But others were grafted into their place and these were the gentiles. The Jews are described as the olive tree that was cultivated because on them God had bestowed peculiar culture: and the gentiles were called the wild olive because on them no such labour had been bestowed. As we read several of the succeeding verses let us remember that we belong to the wild olive and let us take warning by the admonitions of the apostles here given.

Verses 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

*And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*

The apostle means to have the Jews plainly understand that the great body of their nation were rejected of God.

Verses 25, 26 and 27.

*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

By rejecting the gospel the Jews were enemies of God for the sake of the Gentiles that their unbelief might be the instrument of the Gentiles conversion: yet as the originally elect people of God and in regard to the very many of them that would hereafter be brought in according to the election they they are beloved on account of their fathers.

Verses 28 and 29.

*As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.  
For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

Although it is true that God calls men by his grace without any reference to their repentance or rather his calling is the cause not the consequence of repentance yet such is not the meaning of the last verse. It means that God does not repent of his calling and gifts - in other words does not change his purposes.

Verses 30 and 31.

*For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.*

As the unbelief of the Jews was the occasion of the conversion of the Gentiles so in turn the gentile preachers will be the means of the restoration of the Israelites.

Verse 32.

*For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.*

Both Jews and Gentiles had for us season been shut up in unbelief as in a prison but at length he would bring them all to embrace the Gospel - and thus show mercy upon all in millennial days.

Thus far did the apostle think proper to proceed in unraveling the deep purposes of God in his electing love. He knew however that a carnal and unhumbled pride would be starting a thousand new enquiries beyond the reach of mortal intellect. He felt the vastness the unsearchableness of the subject and in the true Spirit of piety exclaims –

Verses 33, 34, 35 and 36.

*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

If any man was able to comprehend God his purposes and intentions - or had been his counselor or if anyone had bestowed anything on God before God laid him under infinite obligations to acquiescence and obedience by conferring favours such as one might be able to reward to us the decrees of Jehovah. But the proper course for weak ignorant mortals was to believe and adore not rashly and blasphemously to reject the idea of his inscrutable purposes. But let men say as much as they please concerning God's right to do what he will with his own certain it is that *of him and through him and to him are all things*. Of him as their infinite and all sufficient Creator – were all things derived - by or through him they all subsist and to him they should all be devoted. Nay all creatures and things will be made to promote his glory. Those who yield to him will promote it by a cheerful obedience - those who resist his will will promote it by the conspicuous display of his justice in their condemnation. Let men then struggle as they please they are fulfilling the purposes of God - they are in his hands and he will dispose of them according to his will. If they refuse to glorify him by unreserved submission to his authority - he will glorify himself in their condemnation. Sinners may murmur and struggle as they please against the sovereignty of God - they may vent their pride and malice against his holy and wise and benevolent decrees but still it is impossible for them to escape out of God's hands or to thwart his designs concerning them. How much better than to adore with Paul the wisdom and unsearchableness of his judgment than to join evil Spirits and caviling against his dispensations!

The chapter under consideration shows us the great danger of abusing our religious privileges.

The Jews abused them and in their punishment we can read our own if we follow their example. Their privileges richer than the whole world besides were taken from them and they were left to the barrenness and wretchedness of unbelief and impenitence. They refused to listen to the voice of God's only begotten Son accompanied by stupendous miracles and God gave them over to ruin. For 1800 years have their whole nation been scattered and parted still clinging to their prejudices still refusing the Son of God as their Saviour. Yet instead of supposing themselves exposed to so terrible a fate the Jews in the times of the apostles fancied themselves to be the peculiar favourites of heaven: and still do they cherish the delusive idea although they carry about the curse of God burned into their foreheads.

And my hearers let us remember that we are equally exposed to abuse religious privileges as were the Jews. It is to be feared that multitudes of us do abuse them and therefore it is that God does not convert

us. And how easy is it for God to take away from any particular people the stated ordinariness of the Gospel they have abused. He has only to leave them to divisions and contentions or send false teachers among them and that people will be left to follow the way to ruin. Let us remember that God is no respecter of persons and if he could visit with such awful calamities the Jews for their rejection of the Saviour what would be the doom of those who like us enjoy the bright light of the gospel if we do not listen to its invitations. If he spared not the natural branches much less will he spare those that were engrafted through his mere good pleasure. How lovely does the woe pronounced on Chorazin and Bethsaida sound in our ears my hearers! *Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida - for if the mighty works and etc. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall ere long be thrust down to hell.*

Secondly that chapter teaches us how dreadful it is to be abandoned of God. It exposes us naked and unshielded to his keenest wrath. It shuts up our hearts against all convictions - it fastens upon us a Spirit of slumber too deep to be broken. It throws around the soul the chains of prejudice and sin binding it in hopeless bondage. How madly obstinate how persevering and sincere are the Jews in rejecting a Saviour! And all because God has abandoned them. Yet they are altogether ignorant of the curse that lies upon them. And it is this fact that makes their situation dreadful. Alike ignorant are those persons among us Gentiles whom God has abandoned. Their prejudices are strong against the truth as those of the Jews but they suppose they are opposing only absurdity and nonsense. While they live in the daily violation of the first commandment they fancy they are living so as God approves. Oh horrid delusion! O dreadful infatuation! My hearers are not we the subjects of it? What effect has the Gospel had on us. If it has not produced our conversion we have reason to fear it has produced our abandonment of God! It must from its very nature have an effect upon us and if it has not subdued us it has hardened us. And if we have been under this hardening influence for twenty or thirty or forty or fifty years how far are we from the wretched condition of the Jews! While we wonder at their obstinacy and hardness of heart let us not forget that our situation may be still more desperate. I repeat we have reason to fear this if the Gospel has not converted us to God. And there is one thing my hearers that will afford most alarming evidence against us if it exist in our case. If we know we have sat many years under the sound of the Gospel and we are not converted and yet are not aroused to a deep anxiety by the subject now under consideration it is a mark - a fearful mark - God grant it may be found upon none of my hearers - it is a sign that man is abandoned by the Spirit of God forever and ever.

Delivered

At Conway June 1825

## Sermon 527 [The Unrepentant Son]

["Rewritten in 1846," 1839 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 6]

*[The original in blue ink seems to be about 5 or 6 pages long and includes four or five heads. Following that is a section in which modes of inducing parental pain are described; it is confused and possibly incomplete. There may be two alternate endings.]*

First Head - From his earliest days they strove to keep his mind free from the impure images and objects of vice: until the hour when they found him associating with the idle the reckless and the dissipated they flattered themselves that they had been successful. But his choice of companions reveals the true plague spot on his heart. It shows that a relish for sin has got possession there and will certainly urge on the inexperienced youth to the practice of wickedness. *For from within out of the heart of man perceived evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these come from within.* He would not associate with the wicked if he did not relish their society and he could not relish it if his taste were not vitiated. And when once the love of sin sways the heart what security is there for the youth the moment the opportunity for sinful indulgence presents itself? These parents therefore feel as if the danger of their son were imminent: and their anxiety is greater than if they themselves were great equally exposed. He knows not the dreadful consequences of a sinful course and therefore will be easily drawn into it. But they know that *the wages of sin is death* and the dreadful anticipation of having their child ruined for this world will and the next feels fills them with anguish none but a parent can know. It brings upon them early gray hairs ploughs deep furrows upon their foreheads and carries them prematurely to the grave. It is in fact slow but certain murder: and that young man whose evil companionship produces such effects will go to God's final judgment - unless he repent - with the blood of his father and his mother upon his head.

Second Head. Distressing as it is to the Christian parents to find that their son loves the society of the unprincipled and the vicious they still cherish a secret hope that God's restraining grace may keep him from open and gross wickedness. But when the fear of God and of man is so far overcome and the gross wickedness is committed those parents hearts feel a new and a deadlier wound. Can it be there darling boy whom they had with so much apparent success taught to be industrious and economical has become a reckless spendthrift who will waste and misapply all the pecuniary means within his reach and still worse will waste his time and neglect his opportunities which are talents of far higher value than money? He knows precisely what will be the result of idleness and dissipation. Oh how altered must be he before he can himself become an example of their ruinous influence! Once he was a delightful example of amiableness and obedience to parental authority and would not for the world do anything to cross a parent's wishes. But how reckless now of their feelings and their authority! How carefully in early life was he instructed in the sacredness of the sabbath. Can it be that he now devotes a holy day to the worthless if not positively wicked pursuits - to the perusal of plays and romances and secular newspapers - or to the society of vicious companions or to wandering about the fields. There is nothing that shows to those parents more clearly how paralyzed are their sons moral feelings and how far advanced he is upon the road to perdition than the fact that he is found even upon any day of the week at the secret convivial frolic where he cannot but hear the lewd and profane jest - where fancied wit takes the place of reason where the sober and the virtuous are made the butt of ridicule - where

sometimes at least the cup of intoxication is circulated and *he looks upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright*, until his firmest temperance principles and education are overcome, and the fatal cup is lifted to his mouth. True, their son may go to that jovial circle with no intention of becoming the victim of intemperance, or of uttering the profane jest, or of learning there to take the name of God in vain, and to sing the lewd and ribald song. You may even suppose that by entering that circle he is only preparing himself for the circles of gentility and fashion and that unless he does learn there how to separate the alcoholic bowl, he can never be admitted to the society of the wealthy and influential. His father and mother know, because again and again have they seen the fatal process carry through, that the young man, however fine his principles, and yet uncorrupt his practice, who enters these convivial circles has already placed one foot within the purview of hell. He has entered a moral maelstrom and is beginning those fatal gyrations which without miraculous deliverance will become swifter and swifter narrower and narrower until he goes down like lightning into the central vortex and disappears forever. In that jovial circle even though it may retain for a free time much of decency will he learn the language and the practice of the wicked. There will he witness if not practice intemperance in some of its multitudinous and least disgusting therefore most dangerous forms. It will prove too a school of preparation for the gaming table: for these convivial meetings cannot long be sustained with intensity without the introduction of games of chance. Their too will the libidinous song, the lascivious innuendo, and the vile story of profligacy prepare the purest mind for the practice of all that is disgusting and abominable. The young man will go from such intercourse if opportunity present to the haunts of fashionable dissipation - the theater will prove a congenial place to his feelings, and the next step will bring him to that house *which is the very way to hell going down to the chambers of death*. True he will not imagine nor believe that such will be the end of his course. For even though he loves the resort of intemperate frolic and sees bolder spirits leading the way to infamy, his feelings still shrink from the practice of gross wickedness and he resents a suggestion that he will soon be among the vilest of the vile. *Is thy servant a dog*, he cries, *that he should do this great thing?* Oh terrible delusion! To what multitudes of unexperienced young men has it proved fatal! *Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?*

But parents are not thus deceived: and as one development after another respecting their son comes out: as wicked actions succeed to wicked companionship they see and know the fatal end to which he is hastening. Though the path of wickedness which he is treading be crooked they know how slippery and how downward it is and how difficult it is for one who has entered upon it ever to thread back his way to virtue and heaven. For one that has thus returned may have seen a monsoon brewed beneath the waves of everlasting infamy and despair. Each successive act of iniquity therefore of which their son is guilty makes a deeper and deeper murderous state into their hearts. They know that idleness and deception and intemperance and profaneness are sins that not only paralyze the conscience but rot out the heart and the intellect and leave the miserable victim to sink down early, a loathsome man of corruption into hell.

And it is a peculiar aggravation of their anguish to find how artfully their son attempts to conceal his wickedness from their knowledge. Though when detected he professes penitence, yet the only ultimate effort is to make him more cautious in future to screen his deeds from parental scrutiny. Delicate lying and even perjury he will unhesitatingly practice, if he can thereby escape detection. Oh where is the parent who would not prefer, so far as suffering is concerned, to have the assassin's dagger at once terminate his days, rather than to be thus put upon the rack, month after month and to be torn asunder piecemeal, by the misconduct of an ungrateful child! If there be such a son now listening to my voice: a son who is guilty of deeds which he would be ashamed to have his father or his mother know, let him be sure that no cruelty can be greater than this towards those parents - and that no murderer's dagger or

bullet could more certainly cut short their days than his misconduct. If he perish in his wicked course he must die with the terrible consciousness that he has murdered his father and mother.

Third Head. Fatal error in religion does not proceed as multitudes suppose from the obscurity of the bible for to the really honest sincere heart it is one of the plainest books in the world. But a man embraces error either because he leads an unholy life or because he indulges a self-righteous unsubdued spirit. A corrupt life will lead him often to vindicate errors the most gross and blasphemous. The more conscience troubles him the more reckless and extravagant will he be in his religious opinions. And his desperate determination to justify himself in a life of sin he will rush even into the cheerless regions of infidelity or atheism. Or if he cannot quite let go his hold on the bible he does what is worse by torturing its meaning by till it no longer warns him of the wrath to come. Self-righteousness prefers some system of error more refined - more capable of literary embellishment and of assuming a philosophical dress. It is essential however that it should be wanting in all that is vital in the Gospel otherwise it will not suit the feelings of a soul that expects to reach heaven without a new heart. But the nearer such a system comes in appearance to the true Gospel the more acceptable will it be: but conscience that stern advocate for evangelical truth in the self-righteous heart will be more easily silenced. It is that stifling of conscience which the Christian parent knows will accompany error in doctrine in his son's heart that makes him almost despairing of his salvation. It is of comparatively little importance what particular religious error that son adopts if it be of such a nature as will suffer him to rest easy without a new heart.

The son may imagine that his views differ so slightly from those of his parents as to cause them but little anxiety. Yet he differs enough to prevent his seeking salvation in the only way in which it can be obtained by the working of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. He differs enough to shut him out of heaven - enough to carry him down to hell as certainly as if with the fool he had said in his heart, *there is no God*. And it is the loss of their son's soul that wrings the parent's hearts with anguish. They well know how easily a man may be made to lie down on the gilded and downy couch of error and there sleep so quietly that nothing but the final trumpet which calls him to the judgment can awaken him. They well know that of all religious men those who have adopted some plausible and popular system of error are the most unlikely to see their true condition and to escape as lost sinners to the stronghold of safety. They know that such are usually given up to strong delusions to believe a lie that they might be damned.

Fourth Head. He may have indulged a hope that his heart was renewed and his sins forgiven and for months or even years have so lived as to punish at least to partial parents some evidence of his piety. But at length the visor begins to fall off and to reveal a heart unrenewed and hostile to the truth. The terrible fact comes out at last distinctly enough to convince even a parent that their son is not only destitute of personal religion, but exceedingly hardened against the truth. What a terrible blow is this to their expectations their hopes and their happiness! They had long indulged hope of meeting their child in the world of glory and the delightful anticipation had buoyed up their Spirits amid the trials of life. Now the bright image is not only extinguished but succeeded by the terrible picture of a child abandoned of God in this world and in another world made a conspicuous monument of his wrath. Now of all the sufferings in this world disappointed hope in respect to the great objects of life is among the most overwhelming. In other trials there is usually an internal elasticity of soul in other words a secret hope that cannot be crushed. But to destroy hope is to break down the stamina of the soul and it sinks under the load. Thus sink these disappointed parents and nothing but the power of God can enable them to bear what may be called this double damnation of their beloved child.



*[This may be the end of the first part of the sermon, all of which was written in blue ink. What follows appears to be a discussion of various modes by which the young man has "murdered his parents." The numbering system is incomplete and out of order suggesting this part has been revised repeatedly.]*

In third place the young man may murder his parents by embracing religious error.

Two sources of religious error - immortality and self-righteousness. The first leads a man to embrace gross error (ex. gr. universalism) the last refined error. The latter most apt to be retained because it seems to come so near the true religion. But it is a little consequence what the error is if it prevent the young man from feeling his need of a new heart. For without this he will perish. No matter then if he embrace some refined and subtle system that retains all the forms of religion and professes to possess all its powers. For without a new heart it will certainly prove his ruin and this it is that sends the dagger to the parent's heart.

In the fourth place young man may mind his father and mother by apostacy in religion.

*[Several pages of text are crossed out and are not transcribed.]*

In the fifth place a young man may murder his father and his mother by neglecting personal religion.

The grand object of all their toils and prayers for their child is his conversion. Failing of this they feel as if nearly all was lost. His amiable and obedient conduct his correct morality and his respectability among men do indeed afford them some consolation. But without a new heart they know he must go down to eternal misery. And that thought outweighs every other and makes them look with comparative indifference and dissatisfaction upon everything of a worldly kind. Have they brought up a child only to endure everlasting misery. Oh how earnestly have they prayed and labored and watched for his conversion! While under the maternal roof every opportunity has been seized for filling his mind with pure truths and strong was their faith that they should see him ere long yielding his heart to the claims of religion. It may be that he left the paternal roof for a time but they still hoped that he would be persuaded when new witnesses for the truth should pour it upon his conscience. He resists his parents and how carefully do they watch his words and actions not to discover whether he has become a scholar has acquired a reputation or property but whether he has learned to sing the new song of redeeming love. And when the melancholy fact comes out that he is still without God and faith and without hope it goes like the assassin stagger to their hearts. They have tried every means in their power to arouse his slumbering conscience and make him see his dreadful condition. Year after year has divine truth been brought distinctly and vividly before his mind in the pulpit and in the domestic circle. He has seen others around him sicken and die and has himself experienced trials as well as mercies. One and another of his companions and friends have yielded their hearts to God and prayerfully professed their attachment to Christ and again and again has the Divine Spirit been specially present in the community where he dwelt. But this son has resisted all and still remains an enemy of God and unalarmed of his condition. His habits of sin are becoming fixed and his religious sensibilities are blunted. These parents too feel themselves rapidly approaching the period when they must leave the world and alas must leave it with no hope of meeting their child in heaven. Faith and hope which have clung to their souls with strong grasp begin to yield and the gloom of disappointment is lowering over their prospects. They begin to prepare for the final separation. But the dreadful flight wakes up unutterable anguish and the parent from his bleeding heart cries out: *Is Ephraim my dear Son? Is he a pleasant child? How can I give thee up Ephraim? Now can I deliver thee Israel?* Ah, they must give him up: but it will be break their hearts. They

will go down to an early grave murdered by a cruel son.

*[The next section refers to a revival of religion; this may have been written some years later when a revival was underway.]*

There is no reason probably when a parent's anxiety is greater for his child than during a revival of religion. He knows that a period for years usually intervenes between such seasons during which it is almost certain that the child will not be converted although meanwhile disease and death will be doing their work. He knows that during such a season every individual comes under a powerful religious influence which when it does not subdue almost inevitably hardens the heart and therefore this child cannot pass through such a work and have the same feelings towards religion as at its commencement. He knows that the probability of his ever becoming converted is very much diminished. His heart before was hard and stupid enough to resist the truth: what hope then now remains except in the mere sovereign mercy of God that it will ever be subdued. Little do the unconcerned sons of pious parents before me know the intense anxiety the deep agony of feeling that are at this moment praying upon the heart of their fathers and mothers. How impatiently do they wait for the news than an arrow from the quiver of the Almighty has reached the heart of their beloved child and slain the hydra-headed monster sin which was crushing him in the folds of spiritual death. Alas how many of them must experience the anguish of disappointment when their sons return to the paternal roof. You will soon perceive my young friends how deeply the arrow enters their souls when they find not only that you are unconverted but that you avoided as much as possible the special means employed during the revival for bringing you to the Saviour. But their closets – the hour of midnight – the stars of heaven – and the God of heaven will witness their anguish as with strong cries and tears they pray for submission to that greatest of all trials which can come upon a Father and a mother, the continued impenitence and stupidity of a beloved child.

*[The following is addressed to sons and young men; it may have been a later version to be addressed to the college community.]*

Is it then too much to say that probably some before me unconsciously I doubt not but still really are the murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers? Are not some of these sons of pious parents wedded to a companionship with those whom they know to be idle or immoral or irreligious? Are not some themselves given up to immoral habits? Have not some fortified themselves in religious errors which they know could be regarded as highly dangerous by those parents and which do effectually glance off the arrows of truth? And do not many neglect religion even under the loudest calls and the most urgent appeals and the special stirrings of the Spirit. Little do such know what poison darts they are hurling into their parents' hearts. In former times the opinion prevailed that it was possible to administer certain poisons in so small a quantity as to be undiscoverable yet great enough to by repetition ensure the death of the victim. That fatal art you are practicing upon those who you better than anybody else and who would prefer to endure suffering and even death themselves if thereby they could ward them off from you. I know this will seem to you extravagant and untrue - you are met under the paternal roof by the smile of affection and the tenderest solicitude is manifested for your welfare. Ah natural affection will never quit those parents hearts till they are cold in the grave nor will the sacred hope of your conversion entirely abandon them while you live and they can pray. But knowing as they do how hard is your heart and how fortified you are either by immoral habits - by the influence of evil companions - by religious errors or by dreadful stupidity they tremble lest you are given over to a reprobate mind and their prayers are almost without faith. And though concealed from your eye there is a secret anguish in their hearts on your account which like an undying worm is feeding upon their life. The mother who has

born you - she whose tears fell often upon your infant cheek over your cradle – she agonized in prayer for your conversion - she who has often grown pale and sickly with midnight watchings by your sick bed – she who first taught your infant lips the language of prayer - she who has followed you with her prayers her tears and her councils in all your wanderings – that mother's heart you are now filling with anguish and her toils for you have not already carried her down to an early grave. That father too who bore you early to the baptismal font and gave you up there to Jehovah - whose cares and toils have been for so many years given to you - who has carefully forgone a thousand pleasures and made a thousand sacrifices for your support and education – whose hopes were centered in you – who has long felt as if death would be welcome could you be converted - who has in fact not neglected one day since you were born to pray for your salvation. Oh what a sense of desolation reigns now in that father's heart as he sees you giving up to sin or stupidity and madly resolved upon destruction. Or it may be that there now his early gray hairs have been brought down with sorrow to the grave. Oh you are the murderer of those parents whether you realize it or not – as really as if you had stolen to their coach at midnight and buried the fatal steel in their bosoms: and for that murder you must answer at the final day of trial where the deadly wounds which you have inflicted will be laid bare to an assembled universe. (\* See loose paper)

*[The only asterisk this may refer to is on page 14 of the scanned images; it marks a page which has been entirely scored out and is not transcribed.]*

But on the other hand just think of the flood of joy that will be poured into those parents hearts to learn that during this work their son has made a great decision and entered upon that bright path that will lead upwards to final glory. Oh they will feel as the angels of heaven feel when the sinner repents and their joy will indeed be the Spirit of heaven and an anticipation of that final meeting before the throne of God when these parents and their son shall begin together the everlasting song.

*[This may be the end of the original sermon and the following a later addition.]*

The dying hour of a Christian mother. You anxiously enquire of the physician what is the disease that is hurrying a beloved parent out of the world long ere old age has paralyzed the powers of life. He replies that it is a fever or consumption or some other well-known malady and to that disease you charge your parent's death. But did you not observe what intentness that mother's eye fastened upon you in her dying hour? Did you not see that her departing soul was agonizing in prayer? Ah, you might have learnt by those signs that your mother died of a broken heart: broken by your continued impenitence. Thus she might have died as a Christian ripe for heaven: but the strongest desire of her heart the most darling object of her life - the conversion of her son - had been so long delayed that the secret anguish preyed upon her constitution until it fell an easy prey to some relentless disease. You are therefore her murderer and your early conversion would have saved her from the grave and filled her heart with holy joy until ripe old age at length released her spirit exulting in the hope of meeting you in heaven. Now she has died without that hope.

But after all I am awfully sensible that most young men are totally unconscious of the effect of their conduct upon their parents' happiness. Nay though they must know that they are thwarting their strong wishes so long as they neglect repentance I doubt not that their hearts still cling to those parents with fond attachment. For filial affection is a cord in the human bosom that retains its sensibility when sin has paralyzed everything in beside. Would to God I could make that cord vibrate till it should rouse you Oh unconverted son and ye young men from the stupor of sin and convert you from the murderers into the temporal saviours of your parents. Should you see that father and mother in the hands of the assassin

and their blood streaming upon the ground and the death cry came into your ears for help how would you rush to their rescue though a hundred swords were drawn to oppose you. Ah they are in the assassins' hands: but thou art the man. They are covered with wounds and their life blood is flowing out like water: but your sins your unbelief are the sword that has cloven their hearts asunder. They are crying for help: but it is to God for your conversion. The language of Christ for his members is this: *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.* In that prayer not even Christ has heard for his murderess could not be forgiven. And can you be forgiven if you persist in this work of death? But only turn from your sins and yield up your affections to God and forgiveness free and full and everlasting will be lavished upon you. The wounds you have inflicted upon your earthly parents will all be healed as if by magic touch and your Father in heaven will joyfully exclaim, *Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. For this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.*

#### Delivered

At Amherst South Parish July 1841

At Northampton Edwards Church June 1841

At South Hadley October 1841

At New York August 1842

At Amherst College September 1842

At Hadley East Parish December 1842

At Newburyport Dr. Dana's Church December 1842

At Hadley West Parish December 1843

At Enfield August 1844

At Amherst Baptist Church November 1845

At Woburn December 1845

## Sermon 528 [Salvation and Eternal Damnation]

[Romans 8:19, 1843 Mar,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 6]

*[Pages 1-12 appear to be a manuscript sent to EH for his consideration. See the cover letter at the end (page 13 of the scanned images). The subject appears to be Romans 8:19. That part has not been transcribed.]*

*[Parts of a sermon by Edward Hitchcock begin on page 14. It appears that the beginning of the sermon, including the passage of scripture, are missing. The first two pages, 14 and 15, appear to be reversed. The transcription begins with page 15, then goes to page 14, then on to page 16. The subject is heaven and hell, salvation and eternal damnation.]*

.....Would this remove alter the character of these persons? Would not he that was righteous, be righteous still and he that was filthy, be filthy still? Just so it will be with those who cross the ocean of death. They enter, indeed, into new and unknown regions; but their characters are not changed.

In all the reasonings on this subject, men seem to proceed on the idea, that God will exert a direct and powerful influence, whereby the saints will be lifted up to heaven, and the sinner thrust down to hell. But the truth is, were God to exert no direct influence at all, and merely suffer the present laws of nature to continue, the one must of necessity ascend to happiness, and the other, sink into misery.

Many corrupt men, entertaining the notion that God is too merciful to punish forever such weak beings as they are, have an idea that they shall be happy hereafter in some way or other. But they do not reflect that with their present disposition, setting aside the question arising from the justice, or benevolence of God, this is contrary to the unchangeable laws of heaven in relation to habit. They forget that were they admitted into heaven, they could not be more in hell. Suppose a profane person, for instance, to enter that holy place. How could he derive comfort from ascribing blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto Him whose name he had ever used as a bye word! And what a hateful change would it be for a drunkard, an impure person, to quit his song of revelry for *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!*

Future misery, then, is the natural consequence of an evil life; and since habit is so omnipresent and unchangeable, what reason have we to suppose that God will ever do violence to those laws he has established, by raising those to heaven who have voluntarily cast themselves down to perdition? Does he any where in providence, or in his word, declare that such will be the case? Produce a single instance from nature, or a single hint from revelation, which implies that the punishment of the wicked will ever cease, and I will not contend against the doctrine of universal salvation.

But it is unnecessary to rest the proof of everlasting punishment on the nature of things. There are indeed evidences, derived from this source, sufficient to awaken the most anxious apprehensions in the reflecting mind, that such will be the case. Yet when we open the bible, we are no longer dependant on reason; but the Spirit of God there speaks in a manner so plain and decided, that none who do not

wilfully close their eyes, can doubt concerning this doctrine.

It will be impossible at this time to produce but a small part of the texts in the bible on this point and I shall therefore confine myself to the most unquestionable. And first the scriptures assert the doctrine of eternal punishment in direct terms, and in language as strong as can be used.

At the conclusion of that most admirable, yet awful description of the day of judgment, given by Christ, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, is the sentence of the judge. *Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels: And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.* Again, 2 Thess. 9. *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.* Jude 13. *To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.* Rev. 14:10-11. *And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.* Rev. 20:10. *And the Devil that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.* Mark 9. *If thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter half into life, than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.*

Now let me ask any man in his senses, if no stronger terms could be found to express the eternity of punishments than those used in these passages. (If man will deny that they prove the doctrine, they will deny anything: and it is unless useless to reason with those, who thus abandon all pretensions to reason.)

In the second place, endless punishment is implied on almost every page of the New Testament. Thus Matthew 12:32 it is said, *whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.* If therefore this sin be not forgiven, it must according to the declaration of God, be punished: and hence, there will be some who will be tormented without end - or at least this continuance of misery is not inconsistent with the government of God.

Again, Mark 14:21. Christ says, *woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. Good were it for that man, that he had never been born.* But if Judas were not to be punished forever, this would not be true. For if he should be restored to happiness after death after suffering a certain time, however long that period may be, and continue happy afterwards through eternity, his happiness would still infinitely exceed his misery; and therefore it was infinitely better for him to have been born.

In John 3:36 Christ says: *He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life.* But if this believer be ever destroyed restored to the house of God, this would not be true. And, my brethren, *let God be true, but every man a liar.*

But it is unnecessary to add more proof from the bible on the subject. For if those already addressed do not convince the man that the scriptures teach that the torments of the wicked will never end, there is, alas, little hope that such an one will ever be convinced, unless, in infinite mercy, the Spirit of God break his delusion. Indeed, so plainly repeatedly and solemnly does the volume of inspiration teach this doctrine that to some it may appear idle labour to endeavor to prove it in form. But we all know that many in the face of all this evidence deny its truth, and we should never neglect the means of convincing such, while the day of grace lasts, and the Spirit is striving with them. I shall now, therefore, examine briefly the objections that are made to this truth.

There are two classes of men, who produce these objections. The first of those, who are more apt to form their opinions in religion from reason alone, than from the bible: and who have viewed the character of God, as a benevolent Being, so long that they have forgotten he possesses, also, the attribute of justice: or, rather, they would have the justice of God circumscribed within very narrow limits. And on this ground, they object to the eternal punishment of sinners, as inconsistent with justice.

In answering this objection, I shall not say, that since sin is committed against an infinite Being, it must itself be infinite, and therefore deserving of infinite punishment. All this may be true, yet we are apt to be with bewildered in our reasonings about the nature of infinities. I would rather reply to the objection by saying that God made in justice punish sin so long as it exist; and it will probably exist through eternity. The man who sins though this life, may sin through another period equally long, and so on forever. Now that the impenitent continue to sin in another world is rendered probable from the nature of habit, and is asserted in the scriptures. St. John in Revelation, speaking of the regions of torments, says, *Without are dogs and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.* This is evidently a description of the future characters of sinners. Says Solomon, *Do, therefore, what thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.* Hence it follows, that in that world there can be no reformation - nor work of salvation: so that sin will continue to exist forever and forever in justice to feel the wrath of the Almighty.

(asterisk)

*[This paragraph marked by an asterisk appears on a separate, smaller sheet inserted at page 19 in the scanned images; the asterisk suggests it may belong in this position in the sermon.]*

It may, however, be said that future punishments are described in the bible as inflicted in consequence of sin committed in this world, and not in another. This is true: but sin in another world necessarily results from sin in this world; and when we speak of punishment inflicted by God, we mean only that He does not prevent the natural consequences of sin. Whatever additional punishment the wicked may hereafter suffer, we contend here for the no other than that which is natural and this is great enough. Surely then it cannot be inconsistent with the justice of God to prevent men to act as free agents - and if, after he has repeatedly and solemnly warned them of that danger, they will not hearken to his invitations to accept of a Saviour, is He under obligations to alter the laws of his government to prevent them from experiencing the natural consequence of their sins which is eternal punishment?

But can we believe that a being of infinite benevolence should punish with interminable and awful misery a creature so weak as man, faced with temptations, and so ignorant of his duty, merely for a few deviations from rectitude?

There is something very plausible in this objection, when viewed superficially by a compassionate mind. But this is too awful a subject to suffer natural feelings to blind eyes in its examination. We must look at these things as they are - as the word of God describes them - and not as we would have them remembering that at *the foolishness of God is wiser than men.*

I could ask, then, whether the benevolence of God can be inconsistent with his justice? If it cannot and all will admit this, we are brought back to the first objection, whether eternal punishment can be consistent with justice? And this has been already answered.

But grant for a moment, that we cannot reconcile this doctrine to the benevolence of God. Does this prove that it is not reconcilable? I will put one question: How is it consistent with the goodness of God to permit sin, and pain, and death to exist in our world, when it would have been as easy for him, to have made every creature in the universe holy and happy? Before sin and pain and death existed, what if we had been called upon to answer this question? Every one of us would have replied, that the benevolence of God would remit these evils. But they [????] and are, therefore, consistent with God's perfection. Does not this show us that we are totally incapable of deciding, whether eternal punishment be consistent with infinite goodness or not? O, we are bewildered and lost, the moment we engage in such speculation as these! And will any one, then, risque his everlasting all upon them? What stupidity, or what madness can be greater?

But I have one more answer to give to this objection. I would ask, how it can be consistent with God's justice, to bestow everlasting happiness upon any one, who has violated his law, merely on condition of his repentance and reformation? We are assured God will bestow this upon Christians, because he has revealed it. But it is just as difficult to reconcile the fact that the justice of God as to see how eternal misery is consistent with infinite benevolence. And why did no man ever undertake to prove that happiness will not be eternal on this principle? The reason obviously is this, because every man wishes for everlasting happiness, but dreads everlasting misery. Here then we see the true source of all the objections that were brought against doctrine of the text. This source is self love: And men disbelieve eternal punishments not because there are any real objections to the doctrine.

Delivered

At Hatfield March 1843 without the changes

At Amherst College March 1843

At Amherst College November 1854

At Amherst W. Parish April 6 Fast Day 1843

At Whately June 11 1843

At Amherst East Parish July 1843

At Richmond August 1843

At Bloody Brook October 1843

At Amherst North Parish January 1844

At Enfield August 1844

At Amherst College March 21 1847

At Conway August 1854



## Sermon 529 [War is in Your Members]

[James 4:1-3, 1846 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 7]

James 4:1-3

*From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

*[This sermon is about the evils of war and ways to end war; it seems to be related to the beginning of the War with Mexico. The first paragraph is written at the bottom of the last page. Note his comments on conscientious objection (8<sup>th</sup> paragraph from the end) and the role of politics in a sermon (next to last paragraph).]*

The subject to which I wish to call your attention this afternoon I had intended to discuss on the late State Fast and had partly prepared for it. But the state of religion here at that time prevented. It may be useless as I doubt not it will to some seem rash to attempt at this time to fulfill my purpose. But a sense of duty growing out of the present condition of the country constrains me to make the effort.

There are some evils whose magnitude and enormity overawe men and build up a wall of defense around them so thick and so high that the Christian more or less shrinks from attacking them and they soon become dignified with the name of necessary evils. Individuals see through the delusion: but the community generally fall in with the idea that so long as human nature remains what it is these evils must be borne and the expostulations of individuals are but the voice of those crying in the wilderness unheeded and disregarded.

Such an evil is war: and such till lately have been the feelings of the great man of men concerning it. But their eyes are beginning to be opened: and yet it is only a few who have a distant view of the evil or any conception of the means by which it can be arrested. Most men have their eyes about as much opened on the subject as the blind man has on whose eyes Christ put his hand. *I see men as trees walking*, exclaimed he, and it needed another touch of the Saviour's hand before he saw clearly. So do we all need the hand of truth to be laid again and again upon our eyes before we shall see clearly the origin the fruits and the remedies of war. I propose to present the subject at this time under these three heads.

But before I proceed it may seem necessary to decide a preliminary question viz. whether every war is to be condemned as wrong or whether there may not be circumstances in which it is impossible to prevent it without incurring still greater evils? It is well known that this question has exerted much interest of late among the friends of peace and that they are chided in opinion concerning it: and for this latter reason I wish not to discuss or decide it here. Nor does it appear necessary to the object I have in view. Without expressing an opinion on this point I choose to take ground in this discourse where I would hope to be viewed by every friend of peace and of Christianity. Suppose we differ on this point – yet scarcely any Christian who believes the bible will doubt concerning the origin and disastrous effects

of war upon the cause of humanity civilization morality and religion. And there are certainly many means in which all such can unite for bringing it to an end.

I am to show in the first place what is the origin of war.

And will it be necessary to go beyond the text to do this? For the very question under consideration is proposed and answered by the apostle. *Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members.* Here all war is traced directly to the evil passions of men. Those passions are represented in the first place as stirring up a war in the soul arraying themselves against reason and conscience and when they have got the victory there they turn the whole man against his neighbour because they covet something which they have not. Hence they are ready to kill one another because they are in one another's way and one possesses what another wants even though it be at the expense of his life. Thus there springs up settled war and fighting to gratify lust. And yet they do not look to God for it. Or if they do pretend to pray they obtain no answer because they ask only for the gratification of lust.

This is certainly a very graphic account of the manner in which war springs out of the lust or desire of what belongs to our neighbour. Very different however is this statement from the high sounding pretensions of those who plunge nations into war. With them it is the vindication of national honor – to avenge a national insult to serve the cause of liberty or religion or some other smooth and taking phrase that shall deceive the rational understanding and shut the mouths of religious men.

*Such is their cry - some watchword for the fight  
Must vindicate the wrong, and warp the right;  
Religion - freedom - honor - what you will,  
A word's enough to raise mankind to kill;  
Some factious phrase by cunning caught and spread,  
That guilt may reign - and wolves and worms be fed.*

[Source: Poem by Lord Byron, 1814]

But can we say that all wars without exception have this vile origin? What shall we say of a man of war waged in defence of liberty a ruthless invader is sacking and burning your cities and towns? Is it not lawful to resist him? Are not those who engage in it on the defensive side actuated by the noblest instincts of the vilest feelings? And when I say that all wars originate in the depraved and ferocious passions of men I do not actually decide the question which I have just declared I should not decide viz. whether all wars are to be condemned? No, my hearers, I think I do not decide that question. For even in a defensive war though we admit that those who resist the oppressor or invader are justifiable by conscience and Christianity yet who begins such a war? Are not the aggressors actuated by the very worst of passions? If so then even this war originates in the most detestable lusts and is peculiarly offensive to God

If we believe the bible then the point is settled that all war originates in the most hateful of human passions and is merely a development in actions of the most diabolical propensities of depraved nature. Let us now in the second place contemplate its fruits and see if they correspond to such an origin.

But on this head where shall I begin and where shall I end. For alas the history of war is the history of

the world. Nor would it be sufficient to give that history as our oldest historians have done it. It is not enough to visit the ten thousand Roman battlefields where host has encountered host and listen in imagination to the dying groans of the millions that have there been mangled and slain. For there is another part of this subject of which no history has ever been written or ever can be: though were it attempted, *I suppose*, with the apostle, *that the world itself would not contain the books that should be written*. I refer to the private suffering which war produces in the region where it is carried on and among those fathers husbands and sons fallen. How dreadful the condition of the people in the region through which the armies pass! The earthquake the volcano the hurricane are mercies compared to this scourge. Those men who in civilized society would be decent in their conduct when converted into soldiers feel the restraint of morality religion taken off and they give themselves up to the vilest of passions. Plundered property houses burnt fields desolate children murdered or slain wives and daughters violated and slain these are the common objects that are seen along an army line of march. Murder and devastation says an eye witness marked the footsteps of the French in their retreat from Portugal in the late war; every house was a sepulchre, a cabin of horrors. *In one small village I counted seventeen dead bodies of men women and children and most of the houses were burnt to the ground. In a small town called Saffrea I saw twelve dead bodies lying in one house upon the floor and every house contain traces of their wanton barbarity. Often were the ditches literally filled with clotted coagulated blood as with mire: bodies of peasants put to death like dogs remind there horribly mangled - little naked infants only a year old or less were found besmeared in the mud of the road transfixed with bayonet wounds: and in one instance I myself saw a baby not more than a month old with the bayonet left still sticking in its neck.* (Book of Peace p. 659)

Such barbarism if it were only a solitary example might pass almost unnoticed. But it is alas a common occurrence and often nearly depopulates wide districts and they revert again to the possession of bears and wolves. Think too of the vast amount of private anguish with which a great battle fills a whole land. A glorious victory! says the official report! Glorious news! says the newspaper. Those bells ring the cannons sound in token of rejoicing and professing Christians assembled in their places of worship to offer up the Decrees and public thanksgivings to God for the success. But such a battle as Waterloo filled nearly all England with the weeds of mourning and Napoleon's last campaign in Russia filled all France I might say nearly all continental Europe with the tears and groans of widows and orphans. But all these sufferings far exceeding the agonies of those who have been slaughtered and concealed from public view while public rejoicing and illuminations songs and orations divert the attention of men from these private agonies. Oh when the last great day shall disclose these private sufferings to the view of the universe how will that universe stand aghast at the horrible spectacle! And let not the men who involve nations in war forget that all those secret sufferings are registered in the book of God's remembrance and will last be required at their hands.

In order to enable you to judge how widespread must be the private misery produced by war let me present you with some details. As to the numbers of soldiers who have been slain by the sword in some of the more remarkable battles and campaigns on record. Recollect that each of these thousands must have had a father and mother and brother and sister and perhaps a wife and children to be riven with anguish and perhaps left to wail by his death.

Take a few examples of single battles. At Agincourt 20,000 fell; at Bautren and Lepanto 25,000 each: at Austerlitz Jena and Lutren 30,000 each; at Eylau 60,000: at Waterloo 70,000: Borodine 80,000: at Fontenoy 100,000: at Yarmouth 150,000: Abela and at Chalus 300,000 each: in the battle between Julius Caesar and the Helvetians 363,000 and another with the Usipetes 400,000 and another with the Germans 430,000.

Sieges often result in a more terrible havoc of life than battles. In that of Izmail there perished 70,000: in that of Ostend 120,000 and that of Mexico 150,000: in that of Carthage 700,000 and in that of Jerusalem more than a million. That of Sebastopol has already reached probably a half million.

In a single war among the barbarians of northern Africa in ancient times no less than 5,000,000 perished and in the wars of Justinian not less than 15,000,000 of the Goths alone. The army of Xerxes with its attendants amounted to about 6,000,000 of which only 3000 escaped destruction. During Bonaparte's last campaign in Russia more than a million perished; and in all his wars not less than 6,000,000. In 42 years the Spaniards sacrificed more than 12,000,000 of American Indians. The wars in the time of Sesostris cost 15,000,000 lives: those of Semiramis, Cyrus and Amanda 10,000,000 each: those of Alexander's successors 20,000,000: the Grecian wars 15,000,000: the Jewish wars 29,000,000: the war of the Twelve Caesars 30,000,000: the Romans before Julius Cesar 60,000,000: those of the Roman Empire of the Saracens and the Turks 60,000,000: those of the Reformation 30,000,000: those of the Middle Ages and the nine crusades in two centuries 40,000,000 each: those of the Zurtens 20,000,000 and those of Africa 100,000,000. Indeed Edmund Burke estimates that about one quarter of the human race have perished by the sword that is 35,000,000,000.

But this enormous expenditure of life is not perhaps the most disastrous effect of war though to the natural feelings the most harrowing. Its influence is dreadful upon the public morals and the cause of religion. It might seem that when men were suffering under this tremendous scourge of God and desolation and death stared them in the face they would learn righteousness. But the fact is directly the opposite. The powerful and constant enactment of a state of war even upon those remote from its immediate operation is to divert their attention from religious things to rouse into fearful action those unholy passions which drive religion from the soul. And then what a hotbed of morality is an army. There is scarcely a spot on earth where intemperance and licentiousness not so shamelessly as in the camp or on board the war of war when in port. Take a single example. When the Royal George an English seventy four sunk near the coast in a storm not less than 600 abandoned females went down to the bottom not of the ocean merely but who can doubt to the bottomless pit with their guilty paramours. And when a war is ended Oh what dregs of pollution are disgorged upon the community to poison all the fountains of virtue and religion! What change has the sabbath in time of war? The Sabbath? In times of war and revolution? There is no sabbath said a pious officer. The sabbath *is a vulgar protest and prejudice*, said a commodore in one navy who has not long since gone to his final account. The battle of Waterloo was fought on the sabbath. Nay more battles have been fought on that day than on any other day of the week and that too by Christian nations. The sabbath in our land has never recovered from the shock given to it in the war of our Revolution.

Nor is it a small matter that the cause of education and every desirable improvement in the condition of a community are arrested usually for a quarter and sometimes for a half a century by a war of only two or three years. And that simply because the nations are so much impoverished that they have no surplus funds for funding seminaries of learning building canals and rail roads and improving the state of architecture agriculture and the fine arts. If you have not attended to the subject you will be amazed at the amount of money requisite to carry on war.

The daily expenses of a line of battleships are about 1500 dollars or more than half a million a year. To keep nineteen such ships in service would cost as much as to educate all the children of United States as thoroughly as is done in the state of New York. The entire annual amount of the income of all the benevolent societies in Great Britain and the United States would not maintain more than ten such ships

in active service: nor would it pay the expenses of the Florida war with a few scattered tribes of Indians.

Our revolutionary war cost our government 600,000,000: and individual losses were certainly as great. This is enough to educate our entire population at this day for 100 years. England expended 500,000,000 which would have educated her population for 90 years. A single war with Bonaparte cost England more than 5,000,000,000 - a sum that would furnish the means of education of the entire population for 350 years and to all the inhabitants of the globe for eleven years. And the wars carried out by England first to humble the Bourbons and restore them to the throne after Bonaparte's usurpation, she expended more than 10,000,000,000 a sum far too great for the imagination to conceive of.

Almost all the national debts incurred by governments have been necessary in consequence of war. A few years since that of Crimea amounted to 133,000,000 dollars, that of Russia to 158,000,000: that of Spain to 315,000,000: that of Netherlands to 665,000,000: that of France to 879,000,000 and that of England to 879,000,000. That of all Europe cannot be less than 10,000,000,000 or five times as much as all the coin in the world and then mere interest on which would more than furnish such school advantages as N. York enjoys to the population of the whole globe.

Look too at the entrance of what is called a peace establishment that is a standing army and a navy and fortifications supposed to be necessary in self defense. In this country which has probably expended less for these objects than any other of equal three quarters of our public revenues for about 18,000,000 dollars have been annually devoted to this object. In France the war Department in time of peace has sometimes cost twenty times more than her civil list. In 1827 a year of peace the military expenditures of England were 220,000,000 and in 1825 they were 256,000,000 or fifty nine times more than her civil list.

In view of these facts what wonder is it that the cause of education and of benevolence has had to struggle so hard among the nations? The wonder is that with such an incubus upon them they have done so much as they have in any good cause.

In contemplating the facts which I have presented – and alas they might be multiplied indefinitely - one almost feels that they are merely the dreams of a disordered imagination. But yet the zeal of sober history is set to them and reality in the light of the present war seems to the benevolent mind so far to overshadow all other evil that if this could be eradicated primitive happiness would revisit the world. But is there any hope of its extirpation? Until of late its giant bulk and horrid aspect have awed into inaction every rising wish to assail it. Men even Christian men seem to have been awestruck by the very enormity of the evil and have submitted to what seem to them a stern necessity and though they knew that time would come when men would beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks they were looking for such a result rather through some miraculous interference than by human instrumentality. But they are beginning to learn that war will continue so long as men wish to have them and no longer: and that all it needs to bring them to an end is to persuade men to live in peace with one another. What then I enquire in the third place are the means by which war can be brought to an end?

In the first place the prevalence of Christianity and a better understanding of its Spirit are the grand means for putting an end to this horrid custom.

No man who reads the bible can doubt that its principals are the very antipodes of the war spirit and

that were all men to come under the influence of those principles worldly difficulties between nations would be settled without resort to the sword. It was indeed the grand object of Christ's mission to proclaim peace on earth and he is emphatically called the Prince of Peace. Nevertheless in modern times it has been the general opinion of the Christian world that the precepts of his Gospel do not forbid them to engage in war and I doubt not that many a sincere and humble Christian has gone from the battlefield to glory. Hence has resulted the strange sight of two professedly Christian nations meeting in combat and having prayed to the same God for success slaughtering each other by hecatombs. *What a shocking sight!* says a late writer. *Lo! crosses dashing against crosses and Christ on this side pouring bullets against Christ on the other. Cross against cross and Christ against Christ.* Imagine these Christian armies to pause for a few moments ere they begin the murderous work in order to repeat the Lord's prayer, *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.* What a fine preparation would this be for engaging in mutual butchery. If that petition were sincere would it not palsy the arm just read ready to give a death blow to a fellow man even though we felt that he had injured us? But the fact is soldiers do not utter the Lord's prayer. They leave all questions of casuistry to be decided by their leaders and think obedience to orders there paramount duty. I am not indeed going to decide whether the slaughter of enemies is in every possible case inconsistent with the Gospel but there is one fact that ought not to be forgotten. During the first two centuries of the Christian era Christians universally refused to bear arms because they thought it inconsistent with Christianity and many of them suffered martyrdom rather than being enrolled in the army. When the Gospel began to be corrupted then Christians persuaded themselves that they might enlist as soldiers. And so general has been their zealousness since that time to engage in war that even were such views of Christianity as are now generally adopted to prevail universally it would not stop the practice of war. It is necessary therefore that the Spirit of Christianity be better understood before even Christians will repair from this murderous work before they will repair even from offensive wars or wars waged to vindicate an insult to the national honor.

In the second place I remark that a grand means of terminating wars is the correction of false sentiments on the subject in the community.

One of these false opinions is that dreadful as war is it is a necessary evil. But suppose all men should be convinced that it is not necessary? Who would be left to fight? And since some are convinced of this why may we not hope that all may be as well as in respect to other evils such as intemperance slavery and duelling. The Quakers a most respectable body of Christians have long been convinced that the bible forbids them to fight? And do they have any wars? And if not necessary for them why is it for any other men? And why may not the rest of the world be convinced of the same fact and act accordingly?

Another false principle that sustains the practice of war and which grows out of the idea that war is a necessary evil is that in time of peace we must prepare for war. What individuals are the most apt to get into personal quarrels – those who learn how to fight and who fancy themselves expert in pugilistic combat or those who feel a strong aversion to the practice and make no preparation for and had rather suffer personal injury than to retort an insult – those in fact that are known as men that will not fight? We all know very well that there is a principle in human nature that which stimulates men to assail him who bullies and defies them while they are very unwilling to attack one who is defenseless and will not return evil for evil. It is just so with nations. If in time of peace they act as if they wanted or in an expected war – war they will soon have. But if they show by disbanding their armies and converting their men of war steamships into merchantmen that they are determined not to engage in war if possible to avoid it very rarely in my opinion will they be attacked.

But here the grand objection meets us if you do not prepare for you will invite the assaults of the lawless and unprincipled and the only safety lies in being prepared to repel aggression. Now I am not going to discuss the question in this place whether in the present state of the world it is expedient or safe for a nation to abandon all means of defense of a warlike character but there are a few things which I would say and which appear to me not understood or appreciated. One is that those nations who have made the most abundant preparations for war in time of peace have had the most wars to carry on. Take for example the Roman empire in ancient times and England and France in modern times. On the other hand we have some examples in which nations have made but slight preparations and they have been affected with few wars. Witness China and Switzerland. For more than five centuries has the latter with a few short exceptions been at peace though in the midst of powerful and wretched nations. A similar policy has for the most part prevailed in the United States and few nations have been more free from wars. The little republic of San Marino in Italy with a population of only 7000 and army of only 60 men has been unmolested in its freedom for more than thirteen centuries. My next remark is that the power of the pacific principles of the Gospel in defending a nation is probably greater than that of armies and navies. It is hard even for a savage to slaughter anyone in cold blood who offers no resistance and were there time I could quote a multitude of examples in which the fiercest barbarians could not muster courage enough to take the life of an unoffending unresisting individual. And in the history of the missionaries Moravians and Quakers we have striking evidence that whole communities can dwell safely without armies in the midst of savages. Thus did the Quakers live in Pennsylvania without molestation for seventy years while all the other settlers of our country were frequently harassed by wars with the Indians. And just so soon as Pennsylvania changed her policy and armed herself she too was involved in hostilities. Oh that some Christian nations would have the courage to follow the example of William Penn and see whether such a course is not more safe than that war system which has hitherto almost universally prevailed in Christendom! At the beginning of such an experiment the nation that throws aside its arms might indeed now and then suffer from the lawless enactions of others. But in the end can doubt that less of property and life would be sacrificed than by the present system? And what a noble heroism that would be which was willing to be offered up a sacrifice in order to bring on the reign of universal peace! How few of these who go so fiercely into battle under the stimulus of heated passion martial music applauding throngs and alcohol would dare to stand firm as did the ancient Christians and be slaughtered because they would not fight. This required a courage as much superior to the bravery of mere military men as moral principle is more exalted than brute instincts. Verily I do not believe that it would require but few martyrdoms of this sort to bring the nations into a league to defend that one which should take the noble stand of offering itself a martyr to the cause of peace.

Another false opinion that needs to be eradicated from the Christian world ere peace can reign is that nations are not required as much as an individuals to love their enemies and to do good to those who injure them. That such a requisition is made of individuals by the precepts of the bible it would be a waste of time to attempt to show. But what possible reason can be assigned why nations should not exercise the same forgiving temper towards one another? What is a nation but a congeries of individuals and how does their union change their moral relations? Now we all know the almost irresistible influence of forgiveness kindness and beneficence towards an individual who has injured us. Why are not nations then equally bound to try the force of this same principle upon their enemies before resorting to arms? When those enemies hunger why not send them food – when they thirst why not send them drink? Suppose only a tithe of the sums usually expended in obtaining our rights by war should be sent in presents to our enemy to see if we cannot conquer him by kindness before the powder and ball. This would indeed be heaping coals of fire on his head. In nine cases out of ten it would subdue the enmity of your foe and convert him to your friend far more effectively than war could do. But whoever heard of a nation that adopted this course? Nay it would be regarded by the world as

mean and pusillanimous to do it. Yet in fact it would indicate a higher and nobler principle of action than any nation has yet attempted. Oh that some Christian nation would have the moral courage to adopt and practice it!

Another cause of war that needs to be removed is a false notion about national honour and national glory that prevail. Most men do indeed attach no very definite ideas to their high sounding words: yet they exercise a prodigious power over the public mind and most persons fancy that national honor requires a nation to be quick and high spirited in regard to everything which lynx-eyed jealousy can construe into an insult and that national glory consists in splendid military achievements and in obtaining as much advantage as is possible over other nations by cunning diplomacy. In short we approve the very things in the nation which we condemn in a duellist. The consequence is that multitudes who abhor duelling engage in wars which have no better justification than most duels – wars in fact which are nothing more than duels between nations. When Christians shall learn to apply the same principles to nations as to individuals in respect to national honour and national glory they will condemn as a necessary one half of the wars which they now approve.

Another false opinion on the subject of war is that national difficulties can rarely be settled without war.

But how are they now settled? Shooting in hewing down ever so many men and destroying ever so much property do not settle the dispute. It must be made up after all by negotiation - or arbitration or mediation. And why cannot this be done before fighting as well as afterwards? It is gratifying to learn that it one or two of these modes many quarrels have been settled within a few years and would the civilized world agree to form a Congress of Nations to which disputes might be referred it would seem as if almost every difficulty might be disposed of in one of the four modes pointed out without appealing to the last resort. How important then that the public mind should be made familiar with the details of these preventatives of war in order that they shall insist upon their rulers adopting them.

(\*insert the loose paper here)

*[The following three paragraphs, marked by an asterisk, appear on two pages inserted into the manuscript between pages 14 and 16.]*

Another doctrine which I regard as false and in collision with the duty men owe to God but which is incorporated into every code of military law maintains that men who are enrolled as soldiers whether in the standing army or the militia are never at liberty to plead conscientious scruples as a reason for not fighting but must obey the orders of their superiors implicitly even though directed to invade a foreign territory and shoot down those who are acting only in self defense and justified by the laws of God and every man's natural sense of right. This blind submission to orders be necessary in a standing army it gives us a mortifying view of the motives by which the subalterns of the private soldiers act. But that in such a country as ours her citizens who are enrolled as militia should not be allowed to consult the dictates of conscience or the law of God at all, as to the cause in which they are called to risque their lives, but must go at the bidding it may be of an ambitious or unprincipled or ignorant rulers and carry on a war which they believe forbidden by God. This is a doctrine which it seems to me cannot long be endured by conscientious Christian men. And yet anyone enrolled in the militia and all able bodied men of a certain age are thus enrolled, whether they consent to it or not is liable to be drafted at the option of our rulers, and if he pleads that he cannot engage in the war that is begun or threatened without violating his duty to God he will be summoned before a court martial for disobedience to orders and that court have power to order him to be shot and they will direct it to be done if he did not submit.



True if a man can say with the Quakers that he cannot conscientiously engage in any war he will not be enrolled. But if he justifies defensive war in the last end extremity he will be liable to be brought into circumstances in which he must decide whether he will be shot by the executioner or violate his duty to God. The constitution of Massachusetts does indeed provide that no soldier shall be compelled without his consent to go out of the limits of the state to assail an enemy: that as it requires him to fight only in a defensive war: but I am not aware that such a provision exists any where else and it is doubtful whether this provision will prove a security even to our citizens.

Now I admit this blind submission to orders and the severe punishments that follow disobedience and this total disregard of a man's conscientious scruples may be indispensable to any efficient military system. But I cannot believe that when intelligent Christian men see it in its true light they will long endure it. Why it reduces to a mere machine and destroys or attempts to destroy his moral agency. It obliges him to do that in some cases which he believes God has forbidden. And who has a right to come in between me and God and attempt to release me from my obligation to obey him and submit my conscience to the direction of a fellow man? Nobody can release him: nobody but myself can judge me when I am bound to risk my life. It is a solemn trust which God has put into my hands and he will not hold me guiltless if I expose or lose it in an unrighteous cause. This doctrine may do for the slave and the serf: but how can enlightened Christian freemen endure it. No wonder that the early Christians when placed in such circumstances preferred to be cut down by the arrow of the executioner to engaging in war which they abhorred.

I am led by these remarks to mention as a third means of putting an end to the war system the diffusion of peace principles in the community and especially among the young. Almost up to the present time the most influential man in society with a few notable exceptions have maintained and inculcated war principles, and sad to say a large part even of the ministers of the Prince of Peace have either done the same or remained silent. The deeds and the spirit of military men associated with the high sounding names of patriotism love of country national pride and national glory have been exhibited before the rising generation as worthy of imitations and they have been trained to the belief that war is a necessary evil and military life a worthy calling. While no effort has been made to make them acquainted with the bible principles of peace. No wonder therefore that wars have been so common and so frightful. The friends of peace therefore should strive to speak correct views on this subject. And I know not how this can be done more easily and effectually than by circulating the work which I hold in my hand called the Book of Peace recently published by the American Peace Society sold for a mere pittance and containing the condensed productions of the ablest writers of the present and past generations on the subject of war and peace. I know not how any Christian man can read this work and not feel constrained in conscience to do what he can in the cause of peace.

I view in the fourth place the improvements that are made in the facilities of intercommunication between nations tending to the extermination of war. These railroads and steam boats and electric telegraphs bring nations nearer together. Now though we may be quite as apt to entertain prejudices against our near neighbours as those remote from us it is not so easy to draw the sword against the former as the latter. Nor it now so easy as previously for ambitious rulers to plunge the nations in war before the people can understand the case and express an opinion upon it and when that opinion is adverse to war no true politician will dare to plunge a nation into it.

This remark leads me to say in the fifth and last place that an important means of preventing every unreasonable war especially in a free country is a decided expression of opposition to it on the part of the people.

One of the modes in which this expression opinion may be made is say is by petition. If a Christian people perceive that there is a danger of a collision with another nation that their rulers have not tried every expedient for reconciliation and especially if the matter in dispute is of small consequence then let petitions be poured into the national councils from all parts of the land urging the government if negotiation fail to resort to arbitration or mediation and at any rate not to engage in war until it is clear that the evils of the war will be less than those resulting from yielding the point in dispute. Since in a republican government the ultimate power lies with the people they have a right and it is their duty thus to express their convictions to their rulers. Suppose all the Christians in our land opposed to war save in the last extremity had done this during the past years when they saw the clouds rising in our southwestern horizon. Who could doubt that the murderous contest in which we are now engaged might have been avoided? (Great Britain had done this during the many months while yet the present war in the East was only threatened.) Who will believe that our troops would have been ordered to take up a position on the farther limit of a disputed territory. But alas not a solitary petition in behalf of peace went up to the halls of legislation from the 20,000,000's of this professedly Christian nation. And we must now reap the bitter fruits of war without the consolation of feeling that we have borne our testimony against it. And in Nevis

*[The next several pages are crossed out in ink and are not transcribed. The paragraph transcribed below is written on a smaller sheet that has been placed over the right side of page 18 of the scanned images.]*

But instead of this the few noble members who did lift up a voice of remonstrance were insulted and trampled on by the great mass of professed Christians and as a consequence one of the most deadly and expensive wars has long ranged with a fierceness and sacrifice of money and life almost without a parallel: a war that will put back all the great plans for enlightening and saving men from a quarter to a half century. Oh how disheartening to find that in spite of all the progress of art science and religion in Europe the high spirit of war still rankles in the heart and can be roused into ferocious action almost as easily as ever.

The circumstances under which I address you my hearers are indeed most disheartening and throw gloom and despondency over the prospect. While I yet speak the toxin of war is sounding all over our land and the requisition comes to our very doors for the young and the middle aged to arm themselves for foreign conquest whenever the constituted authority shall give the command. But this is not the worst of it. A few months since and our almost entire population without distinction of party deprecated war as the direst of evils. Yet now that we have been precipitated into it the community seem everywhere to be giving up their opposition and to be catching its mad spirit and few are the notes of solemn remonstrance that are raised against it. Those who are not infatuated seem to be stupefied and I cannot forget the fearful truth, *Quem deus vult perdere, prius dementat* [*Those whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad.*] I make no allusion to any political party. Such a subject would be the last I would bring into this sacred place. But I wage a war against war and speak with disapprobation and sorrow of those only of whatever political creed who bring this curse unnecessarily upon this land. And yet what can my feeble testimony avail at such a time and who will hear my voice in the uproar and fierce excitement of war? Now shall I be charged with a want of patriotism and of courage or of judgment. But my hearers I had rather be charged with any thing than a want of fidelity to my Master and the cause of humanity. I know well that I cannot arrest and turn back the tide of war that is rolling over us. But I shall have a consolation of having stood up against it and lifted a voice of remonstrance in my humble sphere. And it may be that among those whom I address God may have selected some to be hereafter champions in the cause of peace and perhaps the facts which I have presented may arouse

them to examine the subject and thus prepare for their noble mission.

But after all I confess that my chief hopes in respect to peace lie beyond man and beyond the present generation. For when the benevolent heart pants the question, *Shall the sword devour forever?* The echo comes back prompt and loud from all nations, *it is forever and it shall be forever.* But one higher than the highest has said that the time shall come when *they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more.* And though heaven and earth pass away that promise will never fail. Did not that stand upon the sacred page I might sit down and weep over degraded and oppressed man but I should never dare to hope for his deliverance out of the jaws of that monster who has been seeking his life blood for 5000 years. Now I will hope for, nay, I am sure of his rescue. Now I can pray in faith and let me say in conclusion that after all, prayer is the mightiest engine Christians can employ to bring on the reign of peace. All other means must be baptized in prayer or they will be powerless. Had Christians been more faithful and earnest and believing in prayer who can believe that the cloud of Divine vengeance which is now discharging its thunders upon us would ever have been allowed to gather blackness. Wily politicians and proud warriors may indeed scoff at the idea that humble prayer can ever thwart their plans or disband their armies. But what it did to Pharaoh and Sennacherib and Sisera and Holofernes with their hosts it can do to the whole of earth's armed millions. And when the church learns better the power of prayer and her need of it she will find it *mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.* In answer to it God will scatter the nations that delight in war. *He will make wars cease unto the cry of the earth. He will break the bow and cut the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.* And the halcyon days of universal peace shall come when the Prince of Peace shall unite all the nations into one great brotherhood and earth shall become an emblem of heaven.

Delivered

At Amherst College May 3 1846

At Amherst College November 1855

## Sermon 530 [Minerals: Analogs of Human Character]

[John 2:47, 1846 Jul,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 7]

John 2:47

*Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.*

*[Hitchcock uses terminology from mineralogy to discuss guile in mankind.]*

Duplicity and deceit, cunning craft and artifice are the ideas which we attach to guile. The man under its influence does not exhibit his real character to others but a false one. An Israelite indeed (such as Nathaniel who was alluded to in the text) is a really pious man: and that trait of such a man which is described as *without guile* I denominate *transparency of the Christian character*. The opposite of such a trait - that is where guile is predominant - I denominate *opacity of character*. These terms are borrowed from Mineralogy: and I have conceived the idea of endeavouring to illustrate this subject by reference to that science. I do this not because there is any connection between mineralogy and Christian character. But simply to make my thoughts more impressive and more easily recollected. Such a use I have attempted occasionally to make of facts in science and conceive it to be lawful. It is indeed somewhat quaint; but I am fond of making science subservient as much as possible to the promotion of religion which is its highest and noblest use and quaintness where it aids the memory and teaches no error is not the worst of faults.

Between perfect transparency and perfect opacity of character there is of course an endless series of gradations. Certain points of this series however can be fixed upon which will give some idea of the intermediate grades. And this shall I do by using terms of specimens defined from minerals.

### 1. The entirely transparent character.

Specimens - Quartz – Selenite. Objects seen through them appear unchanged.

Yet no crystal is so perfectly transparent as to make an object seen through it as distinct as seen through air only.

This illustrates the imperfection of the best character.

The world have no doubt concerning such a character. They know how such a man will act in certain circumstances - because they know his principles and motives.

This does not imply that all a man's plans and purposes are to be disclosed.

A transparent crystal does not show all its internal constitution - still it is clear - it is open - and so is a character without guile. Men do not stand in doubt about it. They do not fear some chicanery and

trickery. It is an honest character - the noblest work of God.

## 2. The doubly refracting character.

Explaining double refraction and exhibiting Icelan spar.

It gives two images of objects

To some men in general upright and apparently without guile do nevertheless so split the ways of truth as sometimes to give a false image of things. The rays are divided by the presence of a little of the leaven of selfishness and worldliness and I am afraid that the doubly refracting character is very common among good men.

## 3. The Hydrophanous character.

Described and exhibit an hydrophanous mineral (Opal)

Prosperity often mars a man's transparency. But let the waters of adversity overwhelm him and it will give cleanness and distinctness to his character. It will free him up at least in part from guile.

## 4. The Semitransparent Character.

Explain the term and exhibit a specimen of quartz.

Objects may be perceived through it but not distinctly.

We often meet with such characters. We admire their general conduct and it seems as if they were but slightly out of the way. Nevertheless they are always more or less cloudy. There is a want of definiteness and cleanness in their principles and of decision in their conduct you cannot be sure where you will find them when great moral questions are to be decided.

Notice the Phengites which the tyrants Domitian and Nero used to line their palaces and porticoes. Show specimen.

## 5. The translucent character

Two varieties of translucent minerals

1. Those transmitting white light through them but objects not visible. The only difficulty in this case is that the particles of matter are not properly arranged so as to allow the light to pass through them because the mass was not thoroughly dissolved.

So some men are good upon the whole but not thoroughly good. Divine grace has not been allowed completely to break up and dissolve native selfishness and worldliness and there they will always remain

to mar and mystify their characters. You are afraid of them because you cannot see through them. You wish they had been thoroughly converted and had been freed from artifice and cunning plans and that there was not so much room for selfishness to hide itself in their hearts.

## 2. Minerals translucent but transmitting coloured light.

Specimens of red rock salt and mica.

Here we have a difficulty additional to the cast. Foreign colouring matter has been introduced and colours all objects around.

So do prejudice and self interest give a colour to the opinion and conduct of very many.

The same effect is produced by some favorite notions which are too exclusively dwelt upon. They trigger everything that relates to the man.

Feeble health sometimes produces the same effect - giving a somber hue to every object.

## 6. The character translucent on the edges.

Show specimens of hornstone and flint.

This well represents a man who has come so much under the influence of Christianity that it modifies his external conduct and yet the darkness of sin reigns within. Some mistake the light that passes through the edges of character for genuine Christian experience and friends mistake the same. But unless some light pass through the entire soul - if guile still reigns there - along with selfishness and pride and worldliness external semitransparency avail nothing in the sight of God. That mineral may still feel be full of all subtlety and guile and nought but the grace of God can rearrange the elements of character so as to give it transparency such as God can approve.

## 7. The Opaque Character

Two varieties

### 1. Opaque in one dimension and transparent in another

Ex. gr. Mica

Some men are very clear in their views of doctrine and sense of personal responsibility. But when you press them to act according to their convictions you will find a dark man of selfishness and pride and worldliness which the rays of truth cannot penetrate and which make their professions suspected.

Many too profess to be warm friends to morality and to every moral reform: yet when you press them to aid in the work of moral reformation you find a secret and unexpected opposition. And in fact none are more in the way of every desirable change. Their seeming transparency of character is consumed only to turn away the attention from that opaque man of feeling and opinion that lies at the centre of his heart.

## 2. Opaque entirely

Ex. gr. jasper, coal, etc.

This represents a character bad within and without. Its only redeeming quality is that there is no attempt at concealment. The principles are bad and the conduct is bad and nothing but Divine Grace can make it better.

## 8. The Dichroic or Double coloured character.

Describe dichroism – a mineral shows different colours viewed on different sides - blue on one side and brownish green on the other side (Dichroisite or Dolite) Proceeds from the peculiar arrangement of the particles for reflecting and absorbing light.

Some men exhibit moral dichroism. They have a certain set of emotions and feelings that present one aspect of their character in a strong light though a coloured light which in the illustration I am tracing out implies something defective. But look at them in certain other aspects and they assume a different colour it may be more or less in accordance with the truth.

## 9. The Chatoyant Character.

Describe the chatoyant character of a mineral. It is a play of colours varying as you hold the mineral in different lights. Proceeds from the peculiar character and arrangement of the particles. Example Labrador feldspar.

Chatoyant character is common both among Christians and unbelievers. When men act on the principle of becoming all things to all men they show this character.

One man with sceptics and infidels so talks and acts as to lead them to suppose him of the same view. When with Christians are his language and conduct that they reckon him with them.

So in respect to different sects and views in religion some agree with them all - even though fundamentally opposite. Like the character they assume the colour of the bodies with which they come into contact and soon become suspected by all their influence goes and their Christian character is brought into doubt because it is too obvious that self interest or ambition are the internal causes of this great diversity of external aspect.

## 9. The iridescent character

Irisated minerals often give off a splendid exhibition of all the colours of the spectrum yet it is very superficial arising even from defects or cracks.

Example anthracite coal perfectly opaque beneath the surface.

The iridescent or pavonious character is common that I need not particularize. Wherever there is much

external splendour and opacity and guile beneath - there it is exhibited and generally a gaudy outside is connected with artifice and cunning and duplicity within. In some cases however even quite clear crystals of minerals show this iridescence ( ) but it always proceeds for cracks and flaws within and so some really good men are very proud to indulge in outside show. But it always indicates a defect or flaw in the character.

#### Inferences and remarks

1. These illustrations may afford us some salutary cautions in judging of character.

Recollect that the transparent character is the standard. Hence if there is mystery about the man - if he is jealous of others yet careful to hide himself - if his virtues are cloudy and indistinct - if his opinions are coloured by prejudice and passion - if there is more about him of cunning plans than simple straightforward integrity - if he assumes different aspects in different lights and especially if his principles are concealed he keeps away from the light then I would say be careful how you trust such a man. In short we have reason to fear in regard to ours and other characters just in proportion to our departure from true transparent model.

2. The subject affords us some striking illustration of the Christian sanctification.

The grace of God found his character if not entirely opaque yet more or less so. So that even the light that was in him was darkness. That grace sent the power of eternal trust into chaos and rearranged the affections and rendered the soul in part at least capable of transmitting that light and the false colours of the world and the flesh and the Adversary have been gradually disappearing. But it is not till perfect transparency shall be produced and guile and malice and everything unholy shall be expelled that he can enter heaven. Oh how great the change that must still pass upon many of us in our rush there!

3. Finally how important for our success and usefulness even in this life is a perfectly guileless character!

Jesus Christ is described as one *who did no sin nor was guile found in his mouth* - as if this was the crowning excellence of his character. Indeed an honest man is the noblest work of God. And there have been many such Israelites indeed in whom was no guile - though not free from it in the absolute sense in which Christ was. I will refer to only two examples.

The missionary Schwarz in the wars between the Rajaks and the British.

The American missionary in Syria in the war between the Druze and the Maronites.

It should be an object of the highest ambition for every young man especially to establish a guileless character. Let the community once get the impression that such is not the character that instead of being artless and of unwavering integrity he condescends to duplicity and artifice and to partisan jugglery to carry his points and long will it be before he can disabuse the public mind of that impression and recover their confidence. Let him then take care in the first place to acquire this brightest jewel in the Christian crown and then secure it by a guileless life and he will find that he has a passport to usefulness and honor which nothing else can give. Guile may sometimes carry a point and secure an



ephemeral reputation but dreadful will be the reaction when the truth comes out so that in the end honesty is always the best policy. God grant that the inscription upon each of our tombstones may be - in simplicity and godly sincerity not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God he had his conversation in the world.

Delivered

At Amherst College July 1846

## Sermon 531 [Christians and Moral Sublimity]

[Philippians 1:21 The Slave in the Coal Mine, 1847 May,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 7]

Philippians 1:21

*To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

*[This is one of Hitchcock's best known sermons. It includes his account of the blind slave in the coal mine, paragraphs 23 and following.]*

Few men are able to give an accurate definition of sublimity either natural or moral. But no one probably is without some experimental knowledge of the emotions excited by sublime objects. They have felt them when they looked out upon the shoreless ocean, or from the ship's deck upon its giant waves, or from the top of some lofty mountain, or into some deep and dark ravine bounded by jagged precipices, or when they heard the roaring of the mountain storm, or the bellowing of the thunder tempest. And similar emotions, though of a higher character, have they experienced when they witnessed some heroic or generous or benevolent act, or when they have seen virtue struggling manfully with overpowering difficulties, or submitting calmly to the severest sufferings, or making the highest sacrifices for the public good.

The emotions excited by this latter class of objects constitute *moral* sublimity. Now to my apprehension, no man exhibits so much in his feelings and conduct of the morally sublime, as the humble, consistent, and devoted Christian. Take for an example the apostle Paul, as exhibited in the text. *To me to live*, says he, *is Christ*: that is, so long as I live, I am wholly devoted to his service: I am no longer my own: I am bought with a piece, I am crucified by the world and the world is crucified to me. My personal and selfish plans, my time, my talents, my strength, my life, my all, are consecrated to him who died for me. What noble self-sacrifice is here! What an amiable and exalted state of feeling does he exhibit! And he exhibits too it in the midst of fiery persecutions and obstacles of the most appalling kind. Yet they move him not from his purpose: there he stands in all the calmness and dignity of the morally sublime.

But it might be that his persecutors would triumph, and that and that an ignominious death awaited him. What then! *To die*, says he, *is gain*: nay, he proceeds to show that he hardly had a choice whether to remain on earth to serve Christ, or to go to be with him in heaven. How powerless, upon such a man the threatenings of the infinite persecutor! Death, to most men the king of terrors, has lost its power to alarm him: nay, he is as ready to die as to live. He has risen above the ordinary motives that affect and agitate men, and whether he live or die he knows he shall be engaged in the same services and receive the same approbation of the same Master. What a sublime height for weak mortal to reach!

And yet this same height is reached essentially by every humble and true hearted Christian. In fact experimental piety exhibits in its very nature, exalted specimens of moral sublimity. I know, indeed, that the world look upon the humble and it may be obscure Christian as wanting in the noble characteristics and enlarged views, as bigoted in his feelings, and degraded in intellect. But it is because they have looked at religion through the distorting medium of their prejudices. Let us institute a few comparisons

between the highest examples of moral sublimity that may be exhibited without true piety, and that which is inseparable from the religion of one who has become a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Let me not be understood as wishing to disparage or deny the existence of genuine moral sublimity in the character, motives, and conduct of some men who make no pretensions to experimental piety. My aim is to show that however much they may claim our admiration, their religion presents still higher desires, as an exhibition of moral grandeur.

The first illustration which I shall present of this subject, is derived from the feelings exhibited by man, when they meet with severe disappointment, bereavement, and other outward trials. These sometimes are so concentrated and multiplied upon an individual and seemingly are so much more severe than he deserves, that they turn towards him the attention and sympathy of the whole community. And when they see him calm and uncomplaining: not overwhelmed with discouragement but still struggling on and endeavouring to repair his shattered fortunes, they are filled with admiration. It may be he has been suddenly reduced from affluence to grieving poverty, or from distinction to obscurity and neglect; but his spirit still stands erect amid the ruins, and no one can regard him without experiencing sublime emotions.

Now if that man is not a Christian he must be sustained under these reverses by some considerations derived from the present world. It maybe he is a stoic, and believing all things the result of stern necessity, he meets his trials with apathetic unconcern. Or the hope of better days may keep him cheerful: or he may hide the anguish of his spirit by a smiling countenance, in order to excite the sympathy and applause of his fellow man. But by whatever motives sustained as seen by the world he is a genuine example of moral sublimity.

Look however at the true Christian in such circumstances. In his case two feelings predominate. One is that he deserves far heavier trials than he experiences. Another is that his afflictions are all set upon him by his Heavenly Father, by his best friend. He feels sure, therefore, it is best for him, and for the universe that he should thus suffer: nay that he should meet in uncomplaining submission the severest trials to which flesh is heir, if God chooses and inflicts them. He does not know whether it will ever be better with him: perhaps not. Still he can trust Jehovah: and his feeling is, *it is His law, let him do what seemeth him good*. What! *Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil?* And what though that evil continues to the end of life? Sure is it that *these light afflictions which are but for a moment will work out of far more rewarding and eternal weight of glory*; and therefore he bears up with cheerful fortitude under the heaviest load. Nay he exults in his trials, because he knows that *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*. Oh, is not here a nobler example of sublimity than he can exhibit whose sources of support are all earthly?

My second illustration is derived from a comparison of the aspirations or desires of men after the highest earthly good, with those of the most humble Christian. Earth has objects of desire certainly of no mean character. Even the desire for wealth with a view to expend it on objects of general utility, or for the salary of the wretched, or for the promotion of the arts and sciences, is not a sordid passion; but often it ennobles the possessor when we see him active and enterprising in accomplishing his objects. Still more worthy is the desire for professional distinction or for eminence in the arts or in the councils of the nation; and on no men indeed do the community look with more respect than upon the long time and able statesman who rises above party politics, and aims at the general good. Still more elevated in my opinion are his aims who aspires after distinction in learning. We cannot but admire the true nobility of soul exhibited by that youth who early and deliberately consecrates himself to the acquisition of

literature and science, but with his mark of attainment high, proceeds on in spite of the solicitations of pleasure luxury and wealth - in spite of poverty and feeble health, sacrificing every inferior object to the noble ambition of gathering laurels on the very top of Parnassus; and when we see him at length the successful after long years of toil and patient thought, we cannot but feel that his course bears on it the stamp genuine moral sublimity.

But turn now your thoughts to the most obscure Christian and see after what he aspires. He may be only a menial, nay a downtrodden slave. But so elevated are his aspirings that he looks with comparative indifference upon the loftiest objects of earthly ambition. Nothing short of a crown of glory in heaven satisfies him. The prize of his high callings is suspended upon the height of Mount Zion above. You may offer him the glory of the military conqueror or the eminent statesman or even of the profound scholar, but he would look upon them all as mere baubles compared with the prize before him. He sets his foot upon the loftiest heights of mere earthly ambition and makes it his starting point after infinitely higher glories. What though the world know him not or treat him with contempt. They cannot rob him of his hope of a nobler inheritance beyond the dark valley and shadow of death; and therefore while they despise him, he pities them, when he sees how low and meager are their desires and expectations. Is not this then a loftier sublimity than any aspirations bounded by time can exhibit? See how it elevates and ennobles the meanest intellect and raises the beggar above the prince or the philosopher.

My third illustration is derived from the manner in which men with and without piety regard and treat their enemies.

With a irreligious men it is lawful and honorable to resist and assail in every possible mode those who injure them. A man is not obliged to entertain any other feelings towards those enemies but those of hatred and the desire of vengeance until they are conquered. He may proclaim war against them and employ every artifice which ingenuity and science can devise for their destruction. In the siege and the murderous assault, not even their defenseless wives and children can be distinguished and saved. But when they are conquered and yield their property, their country, and themselves to the victor and beg for mercy, then he may exhibit his magnanimity by taking care of their wounded, feeding those who are starving, and bestowing some special favours upon the leaders. Accordingly almost all the great captains and conquerors of the world have been celebrated for their clemency to the vanquished. And that clemency is always looked upon as magnanimous and sublime. With what moral dignity does Scipio seem invested by the poet when he says to the lover of the beautiful captive lady,

*We both are young, both charm'd. The Right of War  
Has put thy beauteous mistress in my power;  
With whom I could, in the most sacred ties,  
Live out a happy life: but know that Romans  
Their hearts as well as enemies can conquer.  
Then take her to thy soul; and with her take  
Thy liberty and kingdom.* [Source: Poem by James Thomson, 1735]

All this sounds nobly. But what are the motives to the generous deed? Was it a real regard for the happiness of these unfortunate captives? Obviously rather a desire to exalt his own reputation in the glory of the Roman name. And the selfish motives are self-sufficient and explain all the generous acts which history records of the victor towards the vanquished. They are all consistent with the deadliest

hatred in the heart; which shows itself the moment the conquered attempt to regain their rights. But look at the feeling of the Christian toward his enemies. The bright command of his Master is *love ye your enemies bless them that curse you and do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute you*. He is not to wait till he has conquered those enemies before he is to exercise these feelings: but while they are yet pouring upon him their venom, he is to pray for them and do them good. See that humble Christian in his closet, on his knees, sincerely interceding for the man who is seeking his life. Nay see that martyr, amid a shower of stones from an infuriated rabble, kneeling down and spending his last breath in the prayer, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*. There is an example of moral sublimity above all Greek above all Roman fame. But none of the world's most admired heroes ever possessed or exhibited a trace of such feelings. They are peculiar to the Christian and give him an exaltation in the view of superior beings infinitely above the proudest of earth's military chieftains. And yet every day exhibits to superior eyes multitudes of such examples of moral dignity in the unseen walks of Christian life. But the world see them not: or do they regard them as exhibitions of meanness instead of sublimity.

We shall obtain a fourth example illustrative of our subject by comparing the moral dignity of exalted patriotism and a missionary spirit. I will not deny that the true patriot deserves our respect and gratitude. But it is most obvious that what usually goes by that name is merely a form which selfish ambition and love of distinction assume, and with which the mother country has very little to do. And even in those cases which appear to have been most free from the leaven of selfishness, the patriot knows full well that his deeds will be emblazoned in the annals of his country, and that the gratitude and plaudits of multitudes await him. Let him perform distinguished services for his country and his name will be familiar to all. They will crowd around him as he goes among them and triumphal arches, flattering speeches, and loud hurrahs will greet his coming. Who does not know that it is not in human nature to be uninfluenced by such anticipated honors. But even though the patriot's motives be ever so pure, yet the results of his toils and sacrifices are limited to one nation and to its temporal happiness.

Contemplate now the motives and results of the missionary enterprise. He who engages in it expects no admiring crowds to cheer him on: no flattering encomiums upon his benevolence to circulate through the public journals as he leaves his native shores and plunges into the depths of heathen or Mahomedan or papal degradation. Alone, or with one or two companions, he quits all that is attractive in a civilized and Christian land, for all that is repulsive and dangerous in barbarism and polytheism: and there, year after year, must he labour without encouragement, and perhaps in the midst of persecution. Yet he perseveres and if he finds as a result of years of toil and suffering that light is breaking in upon one or a few obscure ignorant minds, and they begin the course of Christian pilgrims, his heart leaps for joy, and he feels amply repaid. Where is the patriot could thus labour and suffer so long for such a results! What then is the superior principle or motive that sustains the missionary? It is the same which brought down the Saviour from heaven: it is the desire to save a mortal man from perdition and prepare them for heavenly felicity. And if one such is thus delivered and saved he knows that the event will be of more importance and be more celebrated in the great spiritual universe than the rescue of a whole nation from civil bondage. How exalted then the ambition of a true missionary. How full of benevolence! How redolent of the spirit of heaven! How free from the dross of selfishness! How full of moral sublimity! How grand, especially when we think of the fine results, even the conversion of the whole world!

It is certainly a magnificent spectacle to see the aged patriot passing through the country, whose yoke of bondage he has broken, and to witness the spontaneous expressions of gratitude which meet him in every city, in every village, and by the way side. So too the scene is full of grandeur, when the

distinguished artisan, or scholar, or philosopher is met everywhere in advanced life, with admiring admiring crowds, who greet him as a distinguished benefactor. But how much nobler would be the scene were the whole community to rise up in honor of the aged missionary who had seen the wilderness, or some savage shore, bud and blossom and become vocal with the praises of God, through his toils and sacrifices! Yet how seldom do we witness any such demonstrations. And is it well that it is so: lest the desire of human applause should mar the purity of the missionary's motives. But such triumphs and honors await him, when he enters the eternal world, where his labours are far better appropriated than on earth.

Ah yes! Though the humble Christian is unknown and neglected by man, he dwells in walks in the midst of a far more glorious society, whose presence and approbation are objects of his strong desire. Nor is his communion with them a mere fancy. Faith makes it real: for strong faith falls but little short of vision. Now the Bible expressly informs the Christian, not that he will hereafter come, but has already come to *Mount Zion and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect: and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.* He does not indeed see them with the eye of sense: but he is sure of being in their midst: and that they surround him as on a great arena. The impression is so strong and the communion with the exalted beings is so real, that he acts under its influence. And what a dignity and moral sublimity does such communion impart to this obscure Christian! He is admitted every day and hour to the noblest society in the universe. The eternal God, and his Son Jesus Christ, condescend to give him access to their presence and around they come to him and manifest themselves to him as they do not unto the world. *[An asterisk in the middle of this paragraph leads to the following inserted paragraph.]* They have provided at an infinite expense a feast of love where from time to time they invite him to sit down and commune with them and with all holy beings in the assurance that they are always ready to manifest themselves to him as they do not unto the world. And thousands upon thousands have testified that around that board they have found those promises fulfilled.

How little then should such an one regard the frowns or the flatteries of men. They may mock at his fancied communion with the holy and spiritual universal: but he feels and knows it to be a reality; becoming every day more and more vivid and absorbing.

Now it elevates an individual in our conception to know that he is admitted to the society of distinguished men, and holds with them familiar intercourse. I derive then a fifth evidence of the superior moral dignity of the Christian character from these considerations. I say superior. For where on earth can such intercourse and communion be enjoyed, as he has access unto? Where the mightiest and most distinguished of men do sometimes meet, and we regard their fellowship as an exhibition of moral sublimity. Still more dignified is that communion which the scholar enjoys with the distinguished men of former generations, through their writings. But what are they, when brought into comparison with the inhabitants of Mount Zion, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem! Oh what dignity and glory must attach to his character, who is freely welcome to their society and sympathy!

I derive a sixth illustration of my subject from the comparative dignity and importance of earthly and heavenly hopes. In the morning of life, indeed, our worldly prospects loom up in bright and beautiful perspective. But as we find in mature years, how many of them are only delusive phantoms, that elude our grasp, we are no longer dazzled by their rainbow hues, and very few do not cry out, *vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*

But I need not attempt to disparage earthly hopes. Many of them are certainly of a noble character and likely to be realized by the industrious and persevering. But giving them their full value, there is one consideration that shows the vast superiority and moral dignity of those hopes that reach beyond the grave. To a large proportion of men earthly hopes must be very limited and meager. They can neither expect to become wealthy, or much distinguished, or learned. And vast multitudes is in the lower walks of life especially are so situated, either through misfortune, or the inflexible customs of society, that they can have no hope of ever rising much above their present low and degraded condition. But the Christian hope can reach them all: and the more destitute of earthly hopes the more firmly will the anchor of the soul take hold of that within the veil (that is beyond the dark valley) and thus may the highest moral dignity be given to the man whose outward condition is low and cheerless as any which the annals of poverty and misery describe.

Allow me here to refer to a case that (lately) fell under my observation a few years ago, which illustrates more forcibly than I had ever conceived the priceless value of the Christian hope to the most unfortunate and degraded. (This case has indeed appeared in print: but its appropriateness to my subject will be my apology for briefly repeating it.)

I had descended a thousand feet beneath the earth's surface, into the coal pits of the Mid Lothian Mines in Virginia and was wandering through their dark subterranean passages, when the voice of music, at a little distance, broke upon my ear. It ceased upon our approach and I caught only the conclusion. The sentiment of the hymn, *I shall be in heaven in the morning*.

On advancing with our lamps we found the present passage closed by a door, in order to give a different direction to the currents of air, for the purpose of ventilation: yet this door must be opened occasionally to let the rail cars pass loaded with coal. And to accomplish this, we found sitting by the door, an aged blind slave, whose eyes had been entirely destroyed by a blast of gun powder many years before in that mine. There he sat on a seat cut in the coal from sunrise to sunset, day after day, his sole business being to open and shut the door when he heard the sound of railcars approaching. We requested him to sing again the hymn whose last line we had heard. It was indeed lame in expression and in poetic measure very defective: being in fact, one of those productions which we found the pious slaves were in the habit of singing, in part at least impromptu. But each stanza closed with the sentiment, *I shall be in heaven in the morning*.

It was sung with a clear and pleasant voice and I would see the shriveled sightless eyeballs of the old man rolling in their sockets as if his soul felt the inspiring sentiments and really, the exhibition was one of the most affecting that I have ever witnessed. There he stood an old man, whose earthly hopes, even at the best, must be very faint: and he was a slave - and he was blind - what could be he hope for on earth? He was buried too a thousand feet beneath the solid rocks. In the impressive language of Jehovah he had gone *down to the bottom of the mountains: the earth with her bars was about him forever*. There from month to month he sat in total darkness. Oh how utterly cheerless his condition! And yet that one blessed hope of a resurrection morning, was enough to infuse peace and joy into his soul. I had often listened to touching music: I had heard gigantic intellect pour forth enchanting eloquence: but never did music or eloquence exert such an overpowering influence upon my feelings, as did this scene. Never before did I feel how mighty is the power of Christian hope. Never before did I witness so grand an exhibition of moral sublimity. Oh how comparatively insignificant did earth's mightiest warriors and statesmen her princes and her emperors and even her philosophers without piety appear. How powerless would all their pomp and pageantry and wisdom be, to sustain them if called to change places with the poor slave! He had a principle within him superior to them all: and

when the morning which he longs for shall come, how infinitely better than theirs will his lot appear to an admiring universe. And that morning shall ere long break in upon thy darkness, benighted old man! The light of the natural sun, and the face of this fair world will never, indeed, resist you! And the remnant of your days must be spent in your monotonous tasks, by the side of the wicket gate, deep in the caverns of the earth. But that bright and blessed hope of a resurrection morning shall not deceive you. The Saviour in whom you trust shall manifest himself to you even in your deep darkness; and at the appropriate hour the chains of slavery shall drop off and the double night that ensued upon you shall vanish into the light of the liberty of heaven. And just in proportion to the depth of your darkness and degradation now shall be the brightness of the joy of that everlasting day.

I would add that on inquiring of some of the pious slaves engaged in these mines, I found that the blind old man has a fair reputation for piety, and that it was not till the loss of his eyes that he was led to accept of a Saviour. It may be that the destruction of his natural vision was the necessary means of opening the eye of faith within his soul. And though we should shudder at the thought of exchanging conditions with him on earth; yet who can say, but his peculiar and deep tribulation here, may prepare his soul for a distinction in glory which we might well covet. Oh, how much better to endure even his deep degradation privations, sustained by his hopes, than to partake of their fortune, who live in luxury or pleasure, or riot in wealth; or lord it over prostrate millions; have fame's trumpet sounding before them wherever they go; if with their good things here, we must have their portion in eternity! How very probable that, as they lift up their eyes hereafter in Hades, being in torment, they may see the poor slave in Abraham's bosom, and entreat that he may be sent with a drop of water to cool their parched tongue. (see last page)

My last illustration I derived from the triumphant manner in which many religious and irreligious endure suffering and death.

It cannot be denied that men of every religion and of no religion - the civilized and the savage - have exhibited a most patient endurance of suffering and a contempt of, if not triumph over, death. The vile savage learns from his earliest days, this stoic indifference to the fiercest tortures, and our Christian martyr has gone before him in apparent fortitude upon the rack. Probably no race of men on earth are more reckless of life than the degraded Hottentot, who seems totally destitute of all ideas of religion. Now although there is a degree of moral dignity in seeing any man bear with unthinking firmness the agonies or torture and of death, yet after all, it is only the motive that can give to such a scene true moral sublimity. Hence we look upon the endurance of the tortured Indians as little more than blind ferocity; and we regard the widow on the funereal pile, as a sacrifice to savage custom, or rather to gross superstition and fanaticism. In these and a thousand other causes, there is no just appreciation of the immense value of life as connected with eternity. But the endurance of the Christian is exhibited by one who is unmoved because he is suffering in the cause of truth or by Divine appointment, and who triumphs over death through a principle of faith, and in full view of all the tremendous consequences of an exchange of worlds. In the estimation of the savage or the warrior or the stoic, he gains the highest triumph over death whose nerves are strongest or who has learnt, as the poet describes it, to

*Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favored rage...  
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,  
Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit  
To his full height.* [Source: William Shakespeare, 1599.]



But with the Christian, those who have feeblest nerve and the most acute sensibility, often manifest the firmest fortitude and gain the noblest triumph over the least enemy. Then too such a death is usually only the concluding scene of a well-acted drama; the splendid conclusion of a life of active benevolence - all of which when viewed apart from human imperfection, has been full of moral sublimity. Such a death, also, is impressively sublime, because it is a transition from a state of frailty and sin to a far more perfect and exalted condition. It is fitting that he who goes from a state of sin and suffering - it may be from the deepest poverty and obscurity - to take possession of a crown and a throne in heaven, should make the transition with calmness and triumphant joy. And when we contemplate the vast changes of condition and destiny he is about to undergo, the scene becomes one of unrivalled interest and sublimity.

*Is it his death bed? No! It is his shrine:  
Behold him there just rising to a god...  
Whatever farce the boastful hero plays,  
Virtue alone has majesty in death!...  
What gleams of joy! What more than human peace!  
Where the frail mortal, the poor abject worm!  
His comforters he comforts: great in ruin,  
With unreluctant grandeur, gives, not yields  
His soul sublime; and closes with his fate.  
We gaze we weep! mixt tears of grief, of joy!  
Amazement strikes! Devotion bursts to flame!  
Christians adore! and infidels believe. [Source: Poem by Edward Young, 1742]*

In view of so many evidences of moral sublimity, in the character and conduct of the truly religious man, is it not strange, I enquire in the first place, that the world in general regard piety and as so few attractions and in fact is derogating from man of real dignity, and compelling him to become grovelling if not mean!

I confess that we must make great allowance for the imperfections of Christians, whereby the meanness and selfishness of their nature is often so mixed with their piety, as to mar its fair features. But after all, you cannot make the purest piety attractive to the unconverted man, nor convince him that it will not degrade him to yield his heart to the claims of religion. Neither can you make him relish and delight in the sweetest music, who has no taste for it. Nor will he admire the beautiful landscape who has a disrelish for it: nor he love poetry or painting or statuary or fine architecture, whose taste has never been cultivated. And here is just the difficulty with the unconverted man. His natural taste in respect to religion is uncultivated, nay it is sadly perverted; so that he feels bitter for sweet. He sees no form or comeliness in religion, because he looks at it through the perverting medium of his prejudices, or his unholy passions. Regeneration alone can clarify his mental vision and clothe religion with beauty: and of that regeneration he does not feel the need, because he thinks he has clear views without it, and therefore it is that so many may live and die without the piety that can save them.

In the second place how depraved must that taste be, and how darkened that intellect, which can prefer any condition to that of the Christians!

Yet such preferences are exhibited daily: for all around us we see men adopting those courses of life, which effectually prevent the reception of the Gospel plan of salvation. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, they seek first to gratify their worldly inclinations, and to build up their worldly interests, and when they look at religion, with eyes so purblind, it has no form nor comeliness; and they either turn from it with disgust, or attempt to mold it into such a shape as not to be offensive to their worldly ambition, or love of pleasure, or learned pride, or any other feature of carnality; and then they try to persuade themselves that this caricature is religion. But how blank will be their confusion and better how blank will be their confusion and bitter their disappointment, when conscience wakes up upon them, just as they are about to enter eternity, and see that they still have that unhumbled carnal mind which is enmity with God. Then will they realize how perverted was that taste, and how blind their intellect, not to see and prefer the dignity and glory of humble piety.

In the third place how low an estimate do most Christians set up on their own principles and hopes.

They seem little conscious of the exalted character of the sentiments and feelings with which religion has inspired them. They think more of their personal salvation than the glory of God as the great object of their piety. Hence they suffer the world to mingle with, and debase their religion, and to give it mean and repulsive aspect to the world. Would they think more of the moral sublimity of the part they are called upon to act, and how they are *made a spectacle to the world to angels and to men*, how much greater would be their own happiness, and how much wider their influence (upon the world). It was this consciousness of the exalted part that they were acting, that gives to the history and doctrines of Christ and the apostles such dignity and impressiveness. We do not see them, as alas we do most of their followers, floundering in the mire of the world and plying their muck rakes as diligently as those without religion, nor driving bargains in vanity fair; but high upon the mountain of devotion, we see them living upon the pure manna falling around them, and with an eagle's eye gazing directly upon the Great Central Sun of the Universe. Oh when will Christians generally realize that they are a *chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people!* Then and not till then, will they *show forth, as they ought, the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Finally, what perfection of moral sublimity will the glorified saints exhibit!

Every thing - how much there is - everything that obscures the glory of that character, shall then be left behind, and burned up in the world's last conflagration, and the Christian's princely dignity will be exhibited: not the dignity of an earthly prince; but the more exalted rank of a king and a priest unto God. There too the stamp of eternity, substituted for that of time, will give a priceless value to every feature of his character, that has passed unscathed the ordeal of the last day. Even the feeblest Christian exercise on earth, will then assume its true value and be seen in its true character as one of the links in the chain of emotions which strengthens and enters endlessly into the future. Hence the full development of the Christian character hereafter, will give increased importance to its feeble commencement on earth; and it will be seen to be no exaggeration to say of him

*The noblest creature seen below,  
Ordained to fill a throne above;  
God gives him all he can bestow,  
His kingdom of eternal love!*

*My soul is ravished at the thought!*

*Methinks from earth I see him rise!  
 Angels congratulate his lot,  
 And shout him welcome to the skies! [Source: Poem by William Cowper, 1779]*

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*[The following three paragraphs are from a single sheet glued between the panels of page 11 of the scanned document.]*

The scene which I have now described affords a most animating lesson of encouragement to the trodden and the afflicted and of reproof to the complaining and discontented.

Suppose health does fail us, and poverty oppresses us, and our friends forsake us, and our best laid plans prove abortive, so that a dark cloud settles upon our worldly prospects. Who of us is reduced so low as to be willing to change places with this poor slave? And yet he is able to keep his spirits buoyant by the single hope of future glory. He thinks of a morning that is to come, when even his deep and dreadful darkness shall pass away; the thought has a magic power to sustain him. If we are Christians, shall not that same hope chase away our despondency, and nerve us to bear cheerfully those trials which are far inferior to his! And as to murmuring at the allotments of Providence, and regarding our lot as a hard one, how ashamed ought we to be of such feelings, when we think of the uncomplaining submission of this ignorant slave, sitting alone days and months by his wicket gate, deep in the earth's bosom, and destined never again to see the light of day. Let us see to it rather that his example does not condemn us in the day of judgment and that we be not compelled to take our place far below him in the kingdom of heaven if indeed we enter there.

This scene, also, cannot but remind us of the amazing change which the morning hoped for by this old man will produce in his condition. It was something, I thought, to be lifted out of the deep dungeon where he sits, to the light of day: it would be far more to be restored to sight, when thus brought to the surface (light of day). Another priceless boon would be to relieve from the (chains) rule of slavery; although in the present case I had reason to think that rule of the gentlest kind. But still more glorious will be an introduction into the city of which the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light. Oh, as I looked at the old man in his dungeon, and thought of all the these changes, and of his becoming a pure, spotted spirit in the New Jerusalem, how insignificant did the proudest earthly distinctions appear, and how did the title of Christian swallow them all up, and that only seems of any consequence.

## Delivered

At Amherst College May 23 1847  
At Saratoga Springs August 1847  
At Deerfield October 1847  
At Newbury (Belville) August 1848  
At Conway September 1848  
At Amherst West Parish September 1849  
At Pelham Methodist Society March 1850  
At Amherst College November 1850  
At Granby May 1 1853  
At Amherst College April 1854  
At Boston (D. Westerman's Son) [?] May 1854  
At Amherst East Street August 28 1853 Boston 1854  
At Winfield Courthouse West Virginia February 1855  
At Easthampton April 1855  
At Duttonsville Vermont September 5 1855  
At Northampton Edwards Church September 1855  
At South Deerfield April 26 1856  
At Hatfield August 1856  
At Amherst College September 1857  
At South Hadley June 1858  
At Montpelier Vermont August 1858  
At North Hadley May 1861

## Sermon 532 [Fitting Up a Sick Room]

[Psalms 41:3, 1859 Apr,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 7]

Psalms 41:3

*The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing:  
thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.*

*[This sermon is a discussion of the sick room and the experience of approaching death. A number of paragraphs have been crossed out in pencil. In the last 12 or so paragraphs he describes briefly his spiritual metamorphosis and his long battle with dyspepsia.]*

There are some experiences in this world that make deep furrows on the tablet of memory, exert a controlling influence over our whole being, whether we will it or not. One of these is severe sickness. It brings us often suddenly into new relations, breaks up our old trains of thought, and reveals both this world and the next in new aspects. The mind, too, when the brain is not the seat of disease, often acts in such circumstances with the clearness and vigor before unknown. Men have accordingly not unfrequently given up their sick bed experiences after recovery. I attempted this once in former years in this pulpit. But I have hesitated to do it again although I found that the prominent trains of thought excited by my recent sickness were quite unlike those of former years. In deciding to present some of these, I fear I shall show but little logic or unity; and I may say some things which you will regard as unsermon like. But my mind as yet partakes too much of my physical debility, to allow me to attempt any thing very profound or finished. I trust you will overlook my deficiencies and peculiarities if you see evidence that I your good or the good of the college in view.

The precious promise in my text made to David that God *would strengthen him upon the bed of languishing, and make all his bed in sickness* is represented as his special reward for his kindness to the poor. His enemies felt confident that his sickness would be unto death, and that thus they should at last triumph over him. *An evil disease, said they, cleaveth fast unto him, and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.* But God had ordered differently, and not only would recover him from his sickness, but sustain him and make him triumphant in his conflict with his enemies. *As for me, said David, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face forever.*

In my remarks on this passage, I shall have reference only to the promise of help on the sick bed. God might fulfil it by special interposition, or by the instrumentality of man. The latter is his usual work, at least to some extent, and the sick man's friends are the agents. They make our sick bed, turn it over - as the expression originally has it - and do all they can to strengthen us to bear and overcome the power of disease. This embraces the preparation of the sick man's room, as well as all the care he needs. And when I found in my late sickness, how much all these things had to do with my comfort and restoration, the text I have recited came to mind; and as it has subsequently so often recurred, I propose to use it as the basis of my remarks; although I fear you will not always be able to trace any logical connection between text and sermon.

I propose, first, to give my views of what ought to be the character and arrangements of a sick room.

Secondly, to suggest some of the more important religious lessons taught me in my own sick room.

It will help us to judge of what is needed in the sick room, to enquire what is the precise object of fitting it up. A common impression is that it should be especially adapted for the sick man to make a preparation for death in it and that the more gloomy and forbidding it is if only comfortable the better, since such surroundings would tend to draw off his thoughts from this world. Religious means of grace should not indeed be overlooked in such a room: lest this is only a subordinate object. For of all places in this world, a sick room, especially when disease is urgent and violent, is one of the worst for beginning the work of religion. And if a man is not essentially prepared for death before he is laid upon a sick bed and he dies I have scarcely a gleam of hope that he will be saved. God has provided his sabbaths, his temples, his preached word, and other means by which men in health and in full exercise of reason may prepare to die: but in a sick room a man needs religion in full exercise, instead of then first seeking after it. No; the grand object of the sick room is to prepare a place where our friend may most successfully engage in a desperate conflict with disease, and whatever will aid him in that conflict is appropriate in such a place. Entire submission to the will of God, and the firm hope of heaven, I fully believe to be among the most powerful means of resisting and overcoming disease. But these feelings the sick man must carry with him to his bed of languishing. For if he expects to find them there, as the result of his sickness, he will almost certainly be disappointed. It is a good place to test genuineness of our faith and hope, but a very poor place for obtaining them. I will admit that a few cases can be quoted where genuine conversion has seemed to take place on the sick bed, especially if the sickness be much protracted, and of a mild type. But generally, if the patient recover, such supposed conversions have turned out to be suspicious. Why, a man thrown suddenly upon a sick bed by disease, has quite as much as he can do to grapple with his unrelenting enemy; and to expect that he will then begin calmly and successfully to take up the subject of personal religion, is about as unreasonable, as to expect the man in the midst of the battle, when the bullets are whirring around him, and the sword of his enemy is gleaming over his head, will take out his bible and begin to read it and pray. Yet the possibility that a patient may commence the work of religion in spite of unrelenting disease should lead us always to let the bible, and hymn book, and the Daily Food at least, have a prominent place in the sick room. It is such books only, which contain religion in its simplest form, that he will view even if already a Christian. To a man standing on the verge of eternity one single line from the one single line from the unadulterated word of God has more power in it than all the commentaries and all the volumes of religious reasoning that were ever published. How great its power is, he only can know, who has passed through severe sickness, and learn how a single text of scripture could triumph over pain and weakness, and make death itself look like a conquered foe.

If the leading object in fitting up the sick room be to help him in his conflict with disease, then it is desirable, where it can be, that it should be a pleasant room - large enough to contain a good amount of oxygen, and capable of being thoroughly ventilated at least twice a day. For every physician knows that the state of the sick man's mind has a great deal to do with his recovery, and that a narrow gloomy and unventilated apartment fills with mephitic gases, may cost him his life: while the buoyancy of spirit and mental vigor imparted by circumstances of an opposite character may enable his constitution to throw off its morbid condition.

But though the sick man's room be not originally very inviting, much can be done to improve it. There should be at least one outlet, two are better, through which the sick man may occasionally get a glimpse of external nature. The sight of a tree, even though leafless, or distant forest or mountain; of the earth

any where; though enveloped in snow; and especially the changing traits of the sky and the clouds, have a wonderful effect upon the spirit - often much more than in health, and much more than anything within doors of human production. It is especially desirable that opportunity for this peek at the external world should be enjoyed at the earliest dawn, when the sick man, if ever is in the best state to appreciate the works of God. Just as he wakes from sleep, let the curtain be drawn aside, and if the brain be not diseased, or the vision not too weak, or pain too severe, you have spread a rich feast before him. Well do I remember the delightful influence exerted upon me during a fever, several years ago, by watching the rainbow hues of the December clouds as they ushered in the full morning. So strong was the impression, that no subsequent December has passed without affording a double rest, as I have gazed at the morning drapery of the skies.

In this connection I will say, that so though music, instrumental or vocal, may be hardly proper in the room of severe sickness, yet if an arrangement can be made so that the morning and evening hymn that rises from the family altar can be faintly heard from some other apartment the effect on the sick is often delightful. My mind reverts to several instances in my sick bed experiences - one or two in my last sickness - when awakening in the morning from refreshing slumber the tones of the piano from a distance came stealing softly to my ears and my first thought was - will it be regarded as folly to say it - my first thought was - *I am in heaven.*

In almost every sick room there soon accumulate quite a collection of phials and medicine cups, holding the unpleasant drugs which the patient takes cheerfully because they are necessary. But these pharmaceutic preparations are usually made to stand out in full view of the sick man. How much better would it be to keep them out of sight and to substitute in their place the plate of fruit, or other dainty, which some kind neighbors had sent him. Though the sick man may not be able to eat them, it will revive his spirit to find that others remember him, and sympathize with him, and would rejoice in his recovery; and the buoyant feeling thus excited may react on his disease, so as to form the first step towards his restoration: for it ought not to be forgotten that in severe sickness, the slightest circumstances sometimes decide a man's fate: and I can easily believe that the mere sight of some untasted dainty, sent by a friend, should so rouse the patient's mind that it would throw off the disease that otherwise would have proved incurable.

The walls of the sick man's room should not be neglected: for his eye will run them all over one hundred times in his mind, and his mind will receive favourable or unfavourable impressions from what he sees. Therefore the true question is to place on those walls objects that are agreeable to him. If you have any fine paintings, or decent ones, in your parlor, let some of them especially those of religious character or which give fine views of nature be brought in, and if your friend desired it patient desire it, let them be changed occasionally: or if you have statuary, let some of that appear also: as well as any choice piece of furniture which you think may be agreeable to him to look upon, or use; remembering that this may be one of the little things which will determine his fate.

I freely confess, that if the sick man have no hope in Christ, and has been violently torn from his worldly pursuits, and compelled to face the king of terrors, I should regard many of the preparations of the sick room which I have mentioned as of far less importance. For the dreadful consciousness that he is unprepared to die will so over master all other feelings, that all the surroundings of the sick bed will be matters of indifference.

*[The following paragraph has been crossed out in pencil.]*

And here let me notice a scene not infrequently witnessed in Christian lands, which I can hardly call anything else than a farce. A man supremely devoted to the world is suddenly arrested by severe disease. He is alarmed and so are his family, and not only the physician but the minister is called - the latter treading perhaps closely upon the heels of the former. The sick man is probably agitated by the state of his worldly affairs, by the pains of disease, and perhaps by the medicines he has taken; but the fear of death is his nearest approach to religious feelings. Yet his minister has come and he must suppress all of these feelings and listen to his interrogations. Is he willing to be in God's hand? Of course he is because he cannot get out of them: but he could give all his property if he could. Does he believe in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ? That he has never doubted. Can he not trust in Christ? He hopes he may be able to do it. Does he not repent of his sins? He knows that he ought to do it. Does he wish the minister to pray with him? Most certainly. The minister retires and the man finds that he has enough to do to contend with his disease and to settle his worldly affairs. If he recovers, the world resumes again its disturbed possession of his soul. If he die, friends quote his conversation with the minister as proof that he is saved. Yet what a farce!

The friends of the sick should regard them selves for the time being as his servants, the supreme ruler in his own room. He may often change his mind and seem capricious, and be pleased with difficulty. But all these things they must impute to disease, and if he is not deranged, they must as far as possible do his bidding. It is not many years since nurses and physicians thought it their duty to act the part of Cerberises (military sentinels of the sick) to the sick. But thanks to the progress of science, it is entirely different now. Formerly it was thought to be almost certainly fatal to allow a man in a fever to cool his parched tongue with cold water, or snow, or an ice cream; but that embargo no longer exists. It was supposed also that he must be depleted with blood-letting, and strong medicines, and forbidden to take food or stimulants. But it is now argued that in most fevers the system is sunk below a healthy standard, should not be still farther reduced by medication; and moreover that it is safe to allow even a sick man to follow to some extent his natural instincts for food and drink. This is certainly an agreeable change of views so far as the sick man's comfort is concerned, and I cannot doubt that many of the female constitution has thus been carried through sickness that would have been fatal under what has been called the *heroic treatment* of former days.

*[The following paragraph has been crossed out in pencil.]*

Such are the prominent items that make a sick man's room best adapted to his recovery. But how many there are, who through poverty can have few or none of these conveniences, and must struggle not only with disease but with small unventilated naked and gloomy cells, where almost everything depresses the spirits and adds to the power of disease. My thoughts turn especially to the room of the indigent student such as I have sometimes seen among us when disease had prostrated him. With an ardent love of learning and a desire to do something for the cause of Christ, but with no pecuniary means, he comes among us and because they are the cheapest, locates himself in one of those attic rooms much better adapted for the process of making lampblack than for study: and there, as we might expect, he is at length assailed by disease, and unless private charity find some other place, there he will probably die.

Shall I be pardoned if I describe a scene which I once witnessed in one of the better sorts of these attics in this place. I called to see a student sick with fever who had been given over by his physician and was expected every hour to breathe his last. I then found one of his best friends, with the carpenter, taking his dimensions for his coffin; and so far gone did they suppose him to be, that they were talking freely about the arrangements for his funeral: his friends at a distance having been notified to attend it, and



were on their way. But then sat by the young man a benevolent woman - whose kind attentions in sickness not a few graduates of Amherst College remember with gratitude and to her whispered the dying youth, *may I not have a little water*. It was given, as much as he wished, and the lady began to bathe his face and hands, which so revived him that it was extended over most of his body. That was the turning point of his disease, and that water saved him - the joiner suspended his operations the funeral procession through off their weeds and went home joyfully, the young man recovered, stood among the foremost of his class at the commencement, and is now preaching the Gospel with great acceptance and success. But how many others, perhaps of equal ability, the carbonic acid and discomfort of these attics may have taken out of the world, the record of eternity can alone reveal.

*[The following paragraph is crossed out in pencil.]*

O Amherst, Amherst! The College founded and sustained by faith and prayers, the benefactions and self-denying labours of men eminent for piety and benevolence, the College established *for the classical education of indigent young men are promising talents and hopeful piety*, Oh Amherst, I have somewhat against the - Thou canst, indeed, show the stranger thy unrivalled scenery, thy convenient dormitories thy fine library rooms - thy superb Laboratory - thy philosophical and natural history Cabinets, loaded with apparatus and specimens; and with just pride do you point out these treasures - the fruit of so much toil and sacrifice. But where among them all can you point to the room provided for the sick and suffering indigent student, whom you have, with Christian liberality, invited hither? Till such an edifice can be shown you ought to blush and be ashamed of all your treasures.

I pass secondly to suggest some of the more important religious lessons taught me of late in the sick room.

It is by such lessons that God most effectually strengthens us on the bed of languishing and makes our bed in sickness. Religious truth may not indeed deliver us out of the grasp of disease though such is its tendency but that only can give us strength to bear the most appalling sufferings and to meet calmly the last enemy. The religious lessons of sick men therefore are the most important part of the fulfillment of the promise in my text. The points I shall name are not such as speculation has suggested: but such as occurred to me I know not why in my recent sickness. I mean that I know not why these particular aspects of the truth should have come vividly before me rather than others which might be suggested. It is probable however that God knew what I most needed.

*[A paragraph on page 7 has been covered by a blank sheet of paper.]*

#### 1. Sickness awakens lively gratitude to friends and neighbours, and a warmer charity for all mankind.

Sickness reduces a man to more than infant weakness and dependance; and his relatives and particular friends are obliged, often at the risk of their own health, to watch over him unremittingly; anticipate his every want; attend him through the long hours of night as well as by day, bear with all his unreasonable freaks and capriciousness, and - it may be nervous irritability and fretfulness: and all this protracted through weeks and even months. The man would be a brute not to feel grateful for such services. But every generous heart knows that never does gratitude spring up so spontaneously with such a warm impulse, as when it witnesses the assiduous labours and unremitting efforts of those it loves to alleviate suffering and rescue from death. Could the sick man give utterance to the emotions of his heart, when in his weakness he witnesses the there devoted attentions, it would put into the shade

the comparatively cold and formal expressions of his feelings made after his recovery.

Nor are these feelings confined to those who have the immediate care of the sick man. If his neighbors and friends in the community around him, have manifested an interest in his case - have sent him some delicacies in the form of food or drink, even though he was unable to use them, or have occasionally called to enquire for his state, it has awakened in his heart no ordinary degree of gratitude. Sometimes, especially in advanced life, we feel as though as our days of usefulness were nearly ended and as if the world generally thought we had lived long enough; and we try to come to the same conclusion, and persuade ourselves that perhaps the present is the best time for our departure. Such a feeling tends to give a fatal termination to our sickness. But if we find that the world really wish to have us live longer, the natural love of life rallies anew, and we do all we can to resist disease. Never before was I so sensible of the powerful influence exerted upon the sick man by the slightest attention of those around him, as during my recent sickness; nor ever before was I so sensible of gratitude towards those who remembered me with so many kindnesses. What thanks, especially, do I owe to my Christian friends, for their many prayers on my behalf. A humble, sincere, believing prayer is in fact the richest boon a sick man can receive. Such prayers, I doubt not, it was my privilege to have offered for me by this church, and therefore it is, probably, that I stand before you today.

Such feelings towards the sick man's friends and neighbours tend to awaken into new life his charities towards all mankind. The rough and unkind treatment we sometimes receive from our fellow man is apt to beget a censorious spirit. But we forget it all when thrown upon the bed of languishing, and could joyfully extend the hand of forgiveness and friendship towards the man who has treated us with the grossest injustice. In such a case we spread the mantle of charity over the feelings of men, and think chiefly of the hard conflict all must sustain in passing through life, and in going out of it; and knowing how sharply disease has handled us, we pity them because they must all fall into the same unfeeling hands. In short, pity triumphs over every other feeling, and our strongest desires for all men is that they may embrace the Gospel, and thus be provided with a power that can triumph over all mortal evils.

2. Sickness sometimes shows what a capacity for suffering exists even in our physical constitutions.

In former sicknesses this fact was not forcibly impressed upon me because I suffered so little in comparison with my experience the past winter. I do not refill merely to bodily pain, but to what I would call the terrible exasperation of the nervous system when the vital powers are so prostrated that they can scarcely offer any resistance. This, I cannot doubt, is a far more intense form of human suffering than simple pain. Indeed when enduring it, it seemed to me that it would be a welcome substitute if I might lay my hand upon an anvil and let the sledgehammer, blow after blow, come down upon it, and upon successive portions of my arm, till bone, nerve, and muscle were all crushed into one promiscuous mass. I say that it seemed to me that the mere suffering of such an operation, with a resolute will to bear it, would be far less than the terrible prostration of fever and the rasping of maddened nerves: an experience similar, it seemed to me, to that of the prisoner confined where drops of water fall increasingly on his head; or to that of the Chinese criminal who by whips and goads is prevented from sleeping till the sleep of death comes over him.

In the midst, however, of this fierce onset of disease, it was interesting to observe what power modern medical science has put into the physician's hands to master and control the fury of the storm. I fancied myself to be the tower Malakoff, or the Redan, on one of those nights when they were assailed by the whole power of the allies. It seemed as if the citadel of life must yield in the terrible onset. But then the

physician quietly pointed out the enemy to those old veterans, General Hasheesh and General Chloroform, when a single fire from their batteries stilled the uproar and produced the silence of death, leaving room even for gentle sleep to steal in softly and lock up my wearied senses in refreshing repose.

But my chief object in referring to this subject was to say that if ever in our physical constitution in this world, there is such a capacity for suffering, and we know that our mental constitutions may endure still deeper agony, then how strong the probability that in a future state that same capacity, perhaps both bodily and mentally, may be equally great. For the features of God's government in this world do but foreshadow as we have reason to believe his administration in another. I am afraid therefore that we shall find the terrific descriptions of future suffering in the Bible to be no idle threat - no mere figures of rhetoric. Next to the express declarations of the scripture this argument from analogy has a convincing power scarcely less and when I find that both tell the same story I tremble at the prospect before me unless I can lay a firm hold of the salvation there is in Jesus Christ. And it is strange to me that this argument does not convince and terribly alarm every man who is unreconciled to God.

### 3. Prostration by disease teaches us how entirely the result depends on God's intervention.

This is indeed the doctrine of the Bible. But men have thrust in natural laws between the sick man and God and made his fate to depend on them. I must believe that a few hard blows from unrelenting disease will bring back the Christian at least to the biblical doctrine and he will feel that God's special power must be exerted or he will probably die. For though he may have a strong confidence in his physicians as we ought to have in any thing human, yet he soon discovers that the most sagacious skill can only imperfectly understand his disease: and moreover he fears that if natural laws be allowed unobstructed to have their course they will lead to a fatal result. It needs some power to come in and counteract or modify those laws and that God only can do: and he can do it too without a miracle by touching some of the springs of life out of human view. Oh it is a consoling thought that he can do it: and can give wisdom to the physician and unexpected efficacy to remedies. Hence the Christian will rejoice that he is so entirely in God's hands and the result so wholly dependent upon him. Hence too will he rejoice when he knows that many pious hearts are offering up prayers in his behalf not daunted by the specious plea that it can do no good.

### 4. Sickness shows us the practical value of the doctrine of Christ's humanity in connection with his Divinity.

If he was human he had all the feelings and sympathies of a man - not of a simple man but one who knew no sin. Moreover he had the bitter experience of a man of sorrows who is acquainted with grief. Nay what other man has ever known such intensity of suffering as he? How precious the sympathies of such a man even if he possessed no higher nature? When we are called possessed no higher nature? When we are called to endure similar though lighter trials. His sufferings are not deserved but they were borne expressly for us: *himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses*. We know therefore that he still feels deeply for us in every conflict and this knowledge has a wonderful power to sustain the fainting soul. But when we learn that the same sympathizing elder Brother is also the mighty God the everlasting Father we know that this same man Christ Jesus is also the controller of our condition and destiny. This kindest of friends has himself placed us in the furnace of suffering and he will permit it to be heated one degree above what is necessary for our highest good. Nay his heart yearns over us because he is obliged to heat it so much, and he will deliver us just so soon as it can be done consistently with the purposes of infinite benevolence. Oh what consolation support there is in such truths! Never till my

late sickness did I realize what a mighty power they have to comfort and sustain amid the sharpest onsets of disease. This is indeed having the Son of God to walk with us in the furnace and to be brought out of it with no smell of fire upon our garments.

5. Sickness shows us what a privilege it is to labour in such a world as this for God's glory and the good of man.

A sense of duty I apprehend is the usual motive that impels Christians to action, and they are too apt and fear to look upon their labours as a task rather than a privilege. But when sickness lays them aside, perhaps finally, so that they cannot do anything for God or man, how the aspect of the case changes! They now see that to labour for God and with God for man's good was a favour of which they were not worthy, and of which they are now deprived, it may be, for their unfaithfulness. Most gladly would they not resume their Christian labours, if it were only in the obscurest part of the Vineyard. For so great is the luxury of doing good, and so sweet the thought that we are at work by the side of Christ, of holy angels, and all good men, that to be cut off from it all is a great privation.

Again when in health many feel that the sphere of labour in which they occupied themselves is so narrow, and their means of usefulness so small, that it is little consequence whether they do anything or not. In fact they complain of Providence for not giving them a larger field to work in. Oh what a cure for all such feelings if it is to be laid aside by sickness! How do we then envy the meanest individual, who has health and strength for his daily duties, and realize what a great privilege has been taken from us.

In my sickness in former years the most impressive aspect in which the world presented itself, was its emptiness and vanity as an object of possession and affection. But in my late sickness I saw it in quite a different light. As a field of labour for a rational and immortal being, actuated by the high motives of love to God into man, it seemed to me to be intensely interesting and important; and no sphere of action where God has placed us ought to be called narrow. Indeed, I have learned, and this probably is the most original and important lesson from my sickness, that every action which God commands or approves, however humble in the eye of man, is in fact Great. For it is a Great God who commands it: a Great universe for which it is done; its results may be incalculably Great in coming ages, and its faithful performance will make us Great. Let us cease then to call anything small, which we can do for God's glory or man's good.

6. Sickness affords a Christian an opportunity to see on what a solid foundation his eternal hopes rest.

I know not how it is with others, but with me the last place in all the world for sceptical doubts about the truth of the great plan of salvation through a crucified Redeemer, is in a near view of death. So perfectly adapted does it seem for a sinful dying man in such an hour, that the soul cleaves to it as it as if it were a mathematical demonstration. Indeed, with me, after having in early life gone through with the usual routine of skeptical doubts from semi-infidelity upward to an evangelical faith, the doctrines of that faith have for years seemed about as certain as mathematics. But they always stand out with greater distinctness and seem to have a broader and a firmer foundation when the light of eternity is lit upon them through the vista which sickness opens. It was specially so in my last sickness. When its blows, heavier than usual, seemed to threaten short work of it, my eyes turned at once to see whether the foundation stood firm; and I saw that the granite blocks were bedded deep in the counsel and oath of God and that the fair edifice was as strong and beautiful as ever. I knew that many years ago I had tried to rest on that foundation, and had entered into covenant with God to serve him and be saved. On

his part I knew there could be no failure, since He had recently sworn by two immutable things in which it was impossible He should lie: but on my part the covenant had often been broken: yet had I presently fled anew to atoning blood, and now when amid the wild singings of disease I could do little more than to utter broken ejaculations for mercy, what course could I take but to cast myself in this trying extremity, into the arms of my Saviour. Manifold as my sins had been, I determined to trust and not be afraid, and to cling to the cross till I was forcibly shaken off. I know not whether this was a scriptural course: but it was followed by a stronger confidence that God would carry me through the dark valley, than I ever experienced in former sicknesses. I was not however favoured with any vivid impressions of eternal things, or elevated affections for them; hence I have feared that the course I took had more in it of intellect than of heart. And yet I am satisfied that one of my besetting sins in past times has been a want of trust in God, although I had entered into solemn covenant with him, and had not so sinned that I was willing entirely to abandon my feeble hope. I am more and more satisfied that God loves to be trusted, even by the chief of sinners.

*[The following paragraph has been crossed out in pencil.]*

Some things up led me to fear that my religious experience during my sickness was understood by friends to be of a more elevated character than facts will justify. In its earlier severer stages I did indeed feel an indifference about recovery, which was quite unusual for me, who have always trembled at the approach of death. But in the first place, I got impressed with the idea that it was my last sickness. Secondly I was convinced that so far as my worldly plans and enterprises were concerned, the time for my removal was quite favourable. Thirdly, I doubted whether my days of usefulness were not so nearly over, that I might well be spared. But fourthly and more than everything beside, I had been so long afflicted with wretched health that the idea of release from it even by death was not unpleasant. I am rather unwilling to confess to such an experience, especially before so many in the morning of life who know nothing of such feelings and I hope never will. But it was the result of nearly fifty years conflict with dyspepsy, in all its protean forms and accompaniments. Of those complaints, says Dr. Cheyne, *it was the observation of a learned and judicious physician, that he had seen persons labouring under the most exquisite pains of gout, stone, colic, cancer, and all other distresses that tear the human frame; yet he had observed them all willing to prolong their wretched being, and scarce any ready to lay down cheerfully the load of clay, but such as laboured under a constant internal anxiety, meaning those sinking, suffocating and strangling nervous disorders.* My half century's experience has indeed made me familiar with almost every form of the these hydra-headed maladies. But God has strewed so many blessings in my path,; blessings domestic social literary and religious, that I did hope I might be spared this last and as it were unnatural dyspeptic experience, which Dr. Cheyne has described yet so constant and severe have been my sufferings for a year or two past, that when my last sickness came on the idea of release by death did seem sweet. When I found that there was some prospect that I might partially or wholly recover, the love of life resumed its sway and it is now I am afraid quite too strong.

You will see, then, my Christian friends, that you must bring in modifying circumstances to explain in part whatever of calmness and courage I was permitted to enjoy in the near view of death. I would fain hope that some of it was the result of a firmer faith in the way of salvation by the cross; but how much it was more modified by the other circumstances named, I am unable to say. To God's grace be all the glory of everything genuine in my experience, while to my errors and deficiencies must be imputed everything specious and unreliable. I cannot, however, but bless God, that I, a poor feeble timorous mortal, was enabled by any means to look on death without dismay.

7. Finally sickness gives intense interest to all the circumstances in both worlds connected with the

change just before the Christian.

As the sick man tries to realize the new scenes into which he may be called to enter it may be in a few hours the idea of appearing in the presence of God and his final judge is probably the most solemn. He would gladly know in what way the Infinite God will be manifested to him when he has passed out of the body. But when he thinks of meeting his Judge he knows that the righteousness of Christ will be his only plea, and he feels assured that it will be a prevailing plea. But these are momentous scenes, when we come near them, and think of going as disembodied spirits and alone into such a sacred presence. Oh how different from every thing on earth!

The sick man also cannot but feel anxiety and intense solicitude respecting that mysterious change before him, called death. Will it come as a quiet messenger to give him release from sufferings, or as an unrelenting enemy to inflict intense agony? Will his Saviour be there to extract the sting of death, or will he be left, as his sins deserve, to struggle alone in the deep waters? Oh these are questions of the deepest moment to one who lies helpless almost within reach of the brandished dart of the last enemy.

But the sick and dying man will dwell also with anxious curiosity upon that change which the scriptures assure him will pass over his bodily organization when the corruptible and mortal shall be converted into the incorruptible and immortal. The earthly house of his tabernacle is now dissolving; but the new body, the spiritual body, the building of God, the house not made with hands, is to be provided. Oh how gladly would he learn its nature. It must be material; yet how unlike any thing on earth. What strange sensations may accompany the transition into it! A few hours or days will answer all these questions experimentally.

And that same brief period will show the sick man what new avenues of knowledge and happiness will be opened to the soul when transferred to the house not made with hands. With all his sensorial powers quickened and intensified in the spiritual body, he knows that the clouds and darkness which envelop the soul here, will disappear, and the sun of truth be allowed to pour in a flood of light upon the intellect, while the stream of happiness from its infinite source and with no intermittence of bitter waters as in this world, will always flow free and strong. And there too, sin will have no power to defile these joys and blur this light with its raspy fingers. Oh what glorious anticipations to cheer the gloom of a sick and dying man.

But another class of subjects rather than these speculations will be more apt to occupy the sick man's attention and awaken the strongest emotion. I refer to his parting with earthly friends, and his anticipated recognition of those in heaven. In the fixed gaze and tearful eye of those who come around his bed, he reads their foreboding and his own instincts bring vividly before him the long anticipated power of separation as probably close at hand. He shrinks back from it, and knows that nothing but the iron pressure of death's cold hand can force him to utter the last farewell. Often, too, till faith has gained the victory is intense feeling connected with each transient gaze upon familiar scenes and objects around him: nor can the hope of brighter views on the other side of the flood enable him without a tear to look for the last time upon those he is leaving forever.

There is one separation effected by death which though perhaps little thought of by most sick persons has in it to my mind no small degree of tenderness and pain. Why should not the body which we have always inhabited and which is fearfully and wonderfully made, become with us an object of strong affection? And our separation from it a painful anticipation? At any rate I know not why, during my recent sickness my thoughts and affections returned to the subject with a strong impulse. Though I had

suffered much in my body I could not but feel a strong attachment to an organization that had resisted so many assaults and given me the power to enjoy so much and to labour so long. But now we must part and I found myself addressing my body as if possessed of intelligence in such language as this:

*Companion of my life! We have now been associated more than threescore years, and how much I owe you for the ability you have given me to labour and to enjoy! It was God who gave you to me to be my servant and friend, and all your strength should have been given to his service. But alas, for many years I employed you only for my own selfish purposes, and even up to this day I have continued from time to time to purloin your services for the same ignoble ends. I have abused you, also, by feeding your healthy appetites with poisonous stimulants, and by imposing too heavy a load of labour upon you. Yet all this abuse has not made you unfaithful to me. But with undoubted energy have you striven to counteract all bad influences and to give me strength for my labours. Yours has been a hard service. Assailed in early life by an unrelenting enemy, who has never let go his hold, yours has been a fifty years warfare, and many are the scars which you can show. You have fought the battle nobly, and I thank you, nay I love you for it. But it is time you should have a respite; and I have reason to think that our common Master above means to give it to you now. If indeed, we should find that He proposes to keep us in the field a little longer, I know you will cheerfully struggle on. But the probability is that your work is nearly over. A short season of sharp sufferings, it may be, and I leave you. But my friends will convey you safely to yonder (great resting) place of the dead where no storm can disturb your long and sweet repose. Yet to that resting place shall I come hereafter to make inquisitions for you; and One will come with me who is able to change our comparatively vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. When so fashioned, we shall be reunited, and through eternity engage in the service of God without sin and without suffering. Till that time, venerable soldier, beloved companion, I bid you farewell.*

Overwhelmed by thoughts and scenes like these, how eagerly will the sick man's faith turn towards those Christian friends who have crossed the dark river before him, and are now, as he doubts not, citizens of the heavenly Mount Zion. Now, may it not be, that God in infinite mercy will allow his first experience of the heavenly world to be a recognition of some of those friends. The scriptures inform us that in the resurrection they will be known as readily as are the plants and animals of spring, emerging from the grave of winter: may not the same be true of the intermediate state? If so may not the first consciousness of heaven to the Christian be an awakening from the sleep of death by the sweetest voices of a husband, or a wife, a parent or a child, a brother, or a sister, who have gone before him? And that friend may take him by the hand and first point out to him the wonders of heaven, lead to other well remembered friends; show him the place where the Redeemer's glory and love are most brightly manifested and teach him the first notes of the song of Moses and the Lamb. Thus may faith not improbable anticipations soothe the anguish of nature in parting with earthly friends and light up the dark river with the radiant countenances of glorified friends who stand on the further bank, and awaken the confidence that though compelled to part with those dear to us on earth, we are going to those no less dear in heaven, and that those we leave behind will soon follow after.

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*[The following appears to be an introduction for this sermon when delivered in another setting, perhaps to fellow ministers.]*

The subject which I propose to bring before you this evening is not I suppose exactly appropriate as an Associational Lecture. But as it is the only discourse I have been able to prepare during the past winter, I have thought that the lessons which were taught me during a long and severe sickness might be profitable to those who are exposed - and who is not exposed to the assaults of the same unrelenting enemy who has handled me so roughly.

Delivered

At Amherst College April 10 1859

At Holyoke Female Seminary May 1859

At Amherst East Street. May 1859

At Amherst North Parish July 1859

At Conway September 1850

At Amherst West Parish December 1860

At Deerfield June 15 1862



## Sermon 533 [Corruption by False Philosophies and Learning]

[Colossians 2:8, 1819,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 1]

Colossians 2:8

*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,  
after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

*[This appears to be Edward Hitchcock's first sermon, delivered at Yale in 1819. See references to students. There seem to be at least three alternate endings. It includes a discussion of the sceptic vs. the Christian. See especially his view of the ideal life of a man of learning, sixth paragraph from the end.]*

*[The sermon seems to start on the second scanned page. The text on the first page may actually be part of a revised ending. It is attached at the end in this transcription.]*

Every employment in life has its peculiar moral dangers. Sin is so subtle an enemy, that it insinuates itself into everything human, and makes its most powerful attacks from a quarter least suspected. It is a monster that can assume a thousand forms, and practice a thousand wiles; and it lies in wait for us at every step on either side of our path through life. At one time it meets us as a companion of our amusements apparently harmless and lovely: but secretly insinuating (infusing) its venom into our soul's blood. At another time it appears the innocent and modest object of our affections, and is discovered only by the sting it leaves in our hearts. Sometimes we meet it transformed into the man of business, bustling in the pursuits of commerce in the mechanic arts and in agriculture, seemingly heedless of everything besides, yet watching with untiring aim for the favourable moment to plant its poison in the heart (soul). At one time it meets us in the garb of politeness and generosity. And finally where least expected, it presents itself to us in our studies, having the sage and venerable features of a philosopher. In all these varied forms, it is still sin. If once beguiled the woman in the form of a serpent and it has ensnared thousands of her descendants, with a voice no less sweet and under a form no more suspicious.

It is however a striking excellence of the bible that it describes most of the delusive aspects which it assumes, and contains peculiar cautions for peculiar conditions. Every man whatever his conditions may find something in it, adapted to his particular circumstances. Yet perhaps it contains fewer addresses of literary men, as literary men, than to any other class. Still there are not wanting in the scriptures many admonitions and cautions, particularly applicable to those whose employment is chiefly intellectual. Among these the text is the most peculiar and direct. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ.* The word here translated *spoil* literally means to caving off as a spoil, or to make a prey. And the phrase *through philosophy and vain deceit* means through an empty and deceptive philosophy. The *rudiments of the world*, as distinguished from philosophy, may refer to the heathen religions - called rudiments because they contain only some of the first principles of piety, greatly come corrupted by idolatry and superstition; or the phrase may be intended to represent the pagan philosophy as mere childish lessons in comparison with the sublime doctrines of Christ.

It is probable that the apostle in this passage had a particular species of philosophy in view: viz. that introduced by the false teachers, who had come among the Colossians and taught the worship of angels, according to the dark doctrine of Plato. But since the expressions he uses are general, they may be considered as comprehending any principle opposed to religion, that is advanced under the name of philosophy.

Permit me then, my hearers, to direct your attentions to the principal modes in which a man is liable to be spoiled in respect to religious sentiments through a false and deceitful philosophy. These may all be comprehended under the direct and open attacks of infidels, and the indirect and ingenuous efforts of those who, professing to believe the gospel, do in fact destroy its essence, by bending the scriptures to preconceived opinions.

At this day of light and knowledge few this direct and argumentative attacks are made upon the bible by men of talents. Yet such attacks have been made, and the works of their authors remain. These works, recommended by the beauties of style and the show of argument, will, by many, be read: and although long since and repeatedly refuted, yet to the young and ardent mind, they still disclose an alluring and dangerous field of speculative adventure. The authors of these works rest their hopes of success on ridicule, or on subtle and abstruse argument. With the first, they create a prejudice against Christianity, by associating things with it that have no connection; and thus prepare us for rejecting its pure principles. In the management of argument, they commence with some obvious truth, and insensibly leading the mind through their various connections, artfully introduce inferences not defensible but we, pleased with the novelty of the views, and perceiving the leading sentiments to be correct, do not discover the imposition nor perceive that the uniting thread of reasoning is broken and and we are borne through an airy region unconscious of danger amid the bright visions that surround us (*whithersoever the governor listeth*). In both these cases, common sense, that is those plain obvious principles on which men act in the conscious affairs of life is kept out of sight as too simple and vulgar for the scholar. The moment we can free ourselves from the influence of ridicule at the fascinations of abstract reasoning and turn back to this principle, we discover that we are deluded. Common sense, then, by which I mean the true unsophisticated Baconian philosophy, is the standard to which we should always bring every sentiment advanced against the scriptures; and if it will not bear the test of this, we may be sure it is not true. We should never forget how dangerous in religion is the influence of a well turned jest, nor how prone many minds are to trust to jejune metaphysical subtleties in opposition to the plainest facts - even the evidence of our senses so that learned philosophers seem to have convinced themselves that the material world has no existence except in the mind.

But there is another circumstance that tends greatly to prepare our minds to secure or to receive the opinion of some of these infidels writers, and that is the authority of the names as men of talents. We have, perhaps, followed them with delight through the pleasant fields of literature, and they have been our guides in the more difficult regions of science. In all of these researches, we have found them uniformly correct, discerning and impartial. And we are unwilling to believe their characters can be different when they engage in the discussion of sacred truth. But let it ever be kept in mind that in literature and science, men have in general no motive to embrace and defend error; when they come to the Christian religion a perverse heart insensibly guides the notions of the understanding; because that perceives many of the principles of the Gospel to be arrayed against its desires. Now every one of us says naturally possesses this heart which will which will not and cannot receive the holy and humbling doctrines of the bible. And hence we are not apt to see its effects in the writings of another. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know*

*them; because they are spiritually discerned.*

Let it not, however, be thought that we admit a greater share of talent and acknowledge to be found opposed to Christianity than in its favour. On the contrary, infidel writers will not, for a moment, bear a comparison in this respect, with the defenders of the Gospel. Look at history, and you will find the mightiest minds bowing at the feet of Jesus Christ. Many, whose faculties have been disciplined for half a century in the school of mathematics and philosophy, have torn the wreaths of science from their brows and bound them around the cross. There they have delighted to cast their proudest honors, and to take up on them the yoke of the Redeemer. Place on one side the names of Herbert, Frederick the Great, Voltaire, Bolingbroke, and Shaftesbury, d'Alembert, and Laplace; and on the other Newton, Bacon, Locke, Bradley, Boyle, Hale, Boerhaave and Grotius, and say, on which side lies the greatest weight of talent; and on which would you prefer to hear your name enrolled?

A species of infidel reasoning was fatally employed a few years since, which addressed the passions through the understanding. Sentiments were presented under the garb of reason that were, in fact, no more than appeals to the carnal propensities. But this resort to infidelity has been so fully exposed by able writers, that it is in a great measure, abandoned; and a course has been adopted more artful and more dangerous. This consistent in an acknowledgment of the truth of the bible, as a whole, and then in taking every opportunity to suggest doubts concerning its particular doctrines and full inspiration. This is one of the peculiar evils of our times; and I shall now proceed to develop some of the modes by which men of this character fascinate and finally make a prey of their unsuspecting victims.

This is generally in respect to educated men through the medium of philosophy; and the young are selected as the object, at an age when their passions are strong, their feelings ardent, and they have (made just progress enough to fancy themselves learned) commenced the study of natural laws: for they are then most easily warped from the truth. Being dazzled by the brilliant novelties presented to their view in philosophy, and estimating too highly their acquirements, they have not yet learned how weak are human powers, nor how limited is human knowledge. The sceptick, generally himself superficial and puffed up with *science falsely so called*, encourages, in the young mind, his exalted views of philosophy and reason, representing them as the standards to which all others must yield. The ministers of the Gospel are next described as depreciating reason and science below their real value. They will follow many an artful lecture on the doctrines generally delivered in the pulpit. These will be described as contrary to reason, and the offspring of superstition. To the authority of Moses, in relation to the age of the world, will be opposed the astronomy of Hindustan, the Platonic year, the lava of Etna and the falls of Niagara (the record of geology); and the bible must yield as incorrect in this particular. It opposes philosophy, also in asserting the existence of giants, witches and demons; and many other parts of it as unworthy of God, reason being judge. Here then the way is prepared for denying the inspiration of the scriptures. It will indeed be acknowledged to be a valuable ancient history, subject, however, to corrections. In the New Testament, also, says the sceptick, particularly in the Epistles of Paul, is much incorrect reasoning; and as many things, as a fallible man, he was mistaken. The doctrine of atonement is contrary to reason, and that of the trinity, to mathematics. It will allow that Christ once existed on earth, that he was a great and good man, that he taught a pure morality, was crucified, and perhaps he will grant that God raised him from the dead, as a proof of the truth of his precepts; but to say that he is divine is absurd. The doctrine of depravity, he will decry as contrary to experience; since we find children with different natural dispositions, some good and some bad. He will admit the probability of a future state, yet deny the eternity of punishments, as a doctrine little short of blasphemy. The ordinances of religion, baptism in the sacrament, he will represent as mere childish superstitions, calculated to amuse the multitude, but never instituted by God, nor necessary for the philosopher. And

the sabbath he will regard as a day when men should attend to the cultivation of science and literature, and not a day set apart by God for his worship - since reason will not allow us to suppose, he would lay so great a burden on his creatures.

Thus will the sceptick strip the religion of the bible of all its peculiar doctrines, and while he is instilling this poison into the mind of his pupils, he will take care that the dignity and purity of science (philosophy) be frequently set before him, and its omnipotent power in rendering a man firm under trials. He will likewise frequent point him to the former and present divisions in the Christian church, and to everything wrong, or peculiar, in the conduct of professors: this endeavouring to diminish the value of Christian practice. Many a distinguished name will be quoted as enlisted on the side of what he terms rational Christianity (religion). Indeed, all philosophic men will be described as secretly of the same sentiments; though sometimes obliged to dissemble before a fanatic world. And every effort in the cause of religion will be termed fanaticism, or regarded as resulting from the ardor of youth. No one will excite more bitter reproaches than the man of prayer. For men of the sentiments we are describing, rarely if ever, pray, unless it be for the sake of form. Hence, when we must meet such characters, it will be well to press this question - do you pray in secret, steadily and constantly? For prayer is a duty of natural as well as revealed religion.

Such are some of the objections the sceptick will endeavour to instill into the mind of his pupil. Others of a similar character, will allow more of the doctrines of the bible and grant it a little more inspiration. Such will generally resort to forced interpretations of scripture, by which its plain language, in which even *the wayfaring man, though a fool need not err*; is transformed into nice and subtle disquisition, requiring the acuteness of a metaphysician to understand.

Let us now suppose an ingenuous and ardent mind to be exposed to the society and influence of a man maintaining such sentiments as have been described. Grant even that this person has had a religious education, and has been accustomed to reverence religion. He might at first be rather astonished at the assaults of the scepticks upon doctrines he has learned to respect: but he is a master in philosophy (possessed of supreme talents well versed in philosophy) - a friend and benefactor, and, besides, he does not deny the truth of the scripture; so that he must not be forsaken entirely. A repetition of these attacks renders them familiar to the youth, who has never thought seriously upon religion, but is very fond of learning. Perhaps he now hears from the pulpit a comparison of science (philosophy) with religion, in which the former is described as of little value, without the latter. This awakens his pride, and he begins to assent to the lectures of the sceptick and at length joins in the attacks. Being at that age when nothing will interest that is not new and brilliant, he regards the sermons he hears as dull and insipid, and of little importance. Besides; he now finds that the liberal principles of the sceptick and more favourable to the gratification of his passions than the precepts of Christ, that require the lusts and unholy affections to be crucified. Perhaps at this time, also, he begins to avow his new sentiments in public; and some Christian friend, seeing his danger, expostulates with him, and warns him of the ruin before him. For a moment he is affected and conscience is awakened. He seeks relief in the society of the sceptick who, by addressing his pride finds no difficulty in putting this unwelcome intruder at rest. Alas! There is but little hope that the conscious will, in this world, make many more efforts to arouse the youth who has since reached this point in the road to ruin. Pride of opinion now sways, with a strong hand, the empire of his heart. He has conquered all feelings of gratitude to his parents, plucked up every pious sentiment sown in his heart by their tender care, and admitted into it the poison of infidelity. Every day of his future life will fix this more firmly and spread it more widely, until the Spirit of God shall cease to strive with him, and he shall be given over to a reprobate mind - a curse to society and a candidate for eternal misery.

This dreadful perversion of the minds of the young, is not, however, always the result of the immediate lessons of a master. For the human mind, alas, is ever ingenious in inventing methods to avoid embracing the humbling doctrines of Christ. And the cultivated mind will, even alone, be apt to invent the same lax and sceptical system we have described - much more, then, when it meets with companions of the same disposition. Thus, for example, perhaps these persons hear a sermon that somewhat disturbs their conscience. After the services of the Lord's Day they, as is very commonly the fact with those who do not love religion, instead of retiring to their closets meet together. Here one will indirectly censure the offensive discourse - another will proceed a little farther, and a third still farther, till they have drowned the small voice of conscience in the clamours of a multitude. Thus a league of kindred spirits is formed, mutually, though themselves in conscious of it, pledge to blind each other's eyes (and to rush hand in hand to destruction). Every succeeding discourse from the pulpit, that some awakens reflection, will produce another meeting of these comparisons, and, at length, a systematic method of defense will be invented - prejudice will be rooted, pride will be enlisted, and unless the spirit of God intervene, blindness of mind and hardness of heart will become entire and complete.

We will now spend a few moments in examining the effects, in this and another world, of being thus spoiled through false philosophy. And it will exhibit the subject in a clearer light, to contrast the philosophical sceptic and the philosophical Christian.

Let us suppose a young man of good abilities and acquirements, having imbibed the semi-infidel principles above described, to go forth into the world, to take his place as an active member of society. Such an one for a time conceal his sentiments in regard to religion; and the world (too seldom enquiring whether piety be joined with talents) will grant him a name and influence. But in the present state of society, when neutrality is opposition, a man of eminence cannot long dissemble concerning religion. This man, therefore, having now established himself in a profession and some business, avows his principles. These are so hostile to the feelings of the pious, that there can be no union. The sceptic, accordingly, becomes the rallying point of opposition to the principles advanced in the pulpit. And his reputation as a man of talents will allure many of the unprincipled and ignorant to his standard. Arrived at this point, the miserable man is almost beyond the hope of reformation. Pride has cast around him a double mail of adamant, through which the arrows of truth cannot penetrate. He has thrown the gauntlet in sight of the world, and at the head of his party. And shall he now submit to have the finger of scorn pointed at him by his meanest followers as having abandoned his principles? Shall he bow before that cross he has so often reviled, and be reviled with it? No: all the corrupt and haughty feelings of his heart spurn an idea so humiliating and he would rather brave the torments of perdition, than fix so deep a stain upon his honor among men.

Yes, my friends, it is a reflection that ought to sink deep into the heart of every student, that in no class of the community, are prejudice habit and belief so unconquerable and unchangeable, as in the literary man. Whatever be his sentiments and practices, when he becomes an active member of society, seldom, very seldom, are they radically changed during life. *He that is righteous, will be righteous still; and he that is filthy, will be filthy still.* Every thing conspires to fix more firmly whatever he may have adopted. If he retract, or change his sentiments, he loses the respect of the world and his pride of opinion must be most severely mortified. Nothing, but the spirit of God, can effect this revolution; and since God acts in general by means, a change is seldom produced. So that whatever character a man possesses when he takes his place as a member of society after completing his preparatory studies, that character continues essentially the same through life - nay more, through eternity.

Such will be the case with the sceptick we are describing. His opposition to genuine religion will daily become stronger and more decided. Before him piety will wither, and droop, and die: and around him will be a region of moral death. No one blesses him as the director of his soul to a Redeemer, and as the means of clearing his moral vision. On the other hand, perhaps he is called to see you a trial of the principles he has instilled in the miserable beings who chanced to live within his influence. One of these on his death bed, realizes his lost situations; and as a disciple calls upon his master for light and consolation, that master coldly tells him that that death is one of the necessary evils of our existence, and since it cannot be avoided, it should be borne with fortitude. Besides, it is at least probable that there will be another happier state of existence. But *I am a sinner*, exclaims the dying man, *and how can I atone for my sins?* Ah his master has no Saviour to whom he can point him. Once he could have stilled conscience by ridicule - by crying out, *superstition!* But such phantoms will afford no support no nourishment on the brink of the grave. Nor will it satisfy those self-condemned soul to tell him that God is a God of mercy. For he knows him to be a God of justice also - and no Saviour is seen to teach him how these attributes can be reconciled in his pardon and salvation. He therefore must die without hope; but not until he has fixed the stare of death on his master, and cursed that cruelty which has led him blindfold to eternal ruin.

Such are thy palms - such thy triumphs, O infidelity! It is thy glorious privilege to seduce from the paths of innocence and peace the young and unsuspecting, to tear them from the vernal beauties and glories which Christian faith spreads over the landscape and to send them drifting over the stormy oceans of scepticism to be wrecked amid arctic iceberg and rocks to tear away the pillars that would support them in their last moments, and to receive their dying execrations!

But the infidel may be a man of science and engrossed in the investigations of philosophy, he reaps but few of the fruits of his scepticism. Oh how meagre is the pleasure of examining the works of nature when we see no God in them - nay more when's nature's God is our enemy! The understanding may indeed be delighted with the pure and abstract forms and proportions of mathematics, and with the unity beauty and harmony of the material universe. But in these pleasures the religious affections compared with which everything else is insipid have no share. We feel nothing but a naked skeleton, perfect, indeed, and firmly united, but motionless and dead. Look now at nature with the eye and heart of a Christian; and this skeleton is clothed with sinew and nerves, and is breathing with life, and beaming with intelligence and love.

Let us now turn our eyes from the sceptick, and look for a moment at the man of learning who is also a Christian. He too is a lover of knowledge (science) and of nature; and he treads the difficult yet flowery paths of knowledge with a foot that is never weary and an eye that never tires. But he has bowed at the cross of the Redeemer, and scorned not to leave of him, *who was meek and lowly*. In the speculation of science, he forgets not that all men are his brethren and demand his labours of love. When he takes his station in society, blessed are those within the reach of his influence. Instead of using his knowledge *to make the blind to wander out of the way*, he leads them to the great physician who will restore their sight. In his presence, infidelity and vice feel how awful goodness is, and a moral paradise soon rises around him.

Many even of his enemies are at length conquered by his kindness and become reconciled, not only to him but through his instrumentality to God. Hence, many will rise up and call him blessed; and some in their last moments, triumphing in the hope of immortality, will bestow upon him as their spiritual guide and counselor their dying benediction.

Such a man, too, has in a great measure conquered the pride of science, that most fatal enemy of virtue and religion. Humbly and reverentially does he daily bow at the altar of prayer; and diffident of his own powers, seeks strength from above. Marks with mildness and affection, even in the most exalted station, he listens to the wants of all; and how he delights to impart to the poverty of ignorance from the rich treasures of his mind.

When engaged in the study of nature, he does not, like the cold hearted sceptick, stop at second causes. Is he devoted to mathematics? He views in these laws a transcript of the divine perfections. Is he an astronomer? He sees the hand of God controlling and directing the immense and harmonious system of the universe. Is he a naturalist? All the variety in earth air and ocean is animated by the breath, and upheld by the goodness of his heavenly father. In short, wherever he be, in whatever branch of learning engaged, he feels that he is in inevitable contact with some display of a wise and benevolent God.

We will view this man in one situation more – in the close of life. He can now look back upon the path of existence he has traveled with composure. For he sees many monuments of science and of religion which his hands have reared on either side of the way. His eye recognizes some, once without God and without hope, but reclaimed by his precept, or example, now travelling with peace and comfort, towards the mansions of eternal rest. But his view of past life is not his only source of comfort. He can, with a joyful even if it be a trembling hope, look forward to the reward of his labours - to a crown of immortal glory; and resting on the arm of his Redeemer, he can say, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*

But not such if reason be not taken away will be the end of the sceptick. As death advances upon him with a sure and rapid step, however firm he may have been through life, he will now feel the misgivings of nature. Though conscience has been insensible to every human voice, it will be roused by the voice of death. And however strong his delusions, they will now be broken. His eye will be irresistibly turned back upon his earthly course, no longer to deceive him with a false vision. He sees, indeed, that the path of his influence has been broad - but it is desolate, without a single object on which his eye can rest with pleasure. The many whom he has robbed of the hope of immortality by words or example, will crowd into his too faithful memory. Gladly would he now undo what he has so long laboured to accomplish - but from death he cannot escape – and his time is come. Agonized by this retrospect, he casts his thoughts forward. But life and immortality do not shine upon him through the darkness of the grave. If he realizes the certainty of another state this brings no comfort but *a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation*, for he has no advocate to plead his case before the tribunal. Overwhelmed by the agony of these views, he either sinks into the wildness insensibility of delirium, or in the violence of despair meets the stroke of death.

Sceptick! I have not yet done. Come, if heart is yet unaffected, come and I will point thee to one scene more. The day of judgment is arrived - the books are opened - and thy soul stands naked before God. There, also, those are arraigned whom thou hast deceived on earth and cut off from hope and from heaven. To thee they point, and without a voice, cry out against thee, as the author of their ruin. Thou hast seduced them - thou hast lead them to the left hand of their judge, and they call for vengeance to be heaped upon thy head by the Almighty. They, indeed, must suffer the punishment of their iniquities. But their blood now rises up in judgment against thee - their blood is required at thy hand.

*[This may be the original end of the sermon. A note at the bottom reads, "At Yale College 1819." On the inside cover are listed three later occasions on which the sermon was delivered at Amherst College (1834,*

*1838, and 1841). The following paragraph is largely repetitious and may be an alternate ending written for a later occasion.]*

But this is not the sceptic's last nor his deadliest conflict. In spite of his unbelief and scoffs the day of judgment comes and his naked soul appears before God to receive its doom. There also stand around him the miserable souls which he led astray on earth and to him with one mind and against him with one voice do they cry as the author of their ruin. For their own sins indeed they will be judged but this man first decoyed them into the paths of death and fortified them against the convictions of conscience and the stirrings of God's Spirit and therefore they cry out for vengeance upon his head. And as both he and they are driven away by the sentence of the Judge into the region of despair that same bitter cry of reproach and execration follows him and pierces him through and through with unutterable agony. That blackness of darkness that undying worm and unquenchable fire that everlasting destruction which he spent his days on earth in proving to be merely the dreams of disordered fancy have now become to him present and overwhelming realities and he who tormented and scoffed at and ridiculed future punishment on earth is now taunted and ridiculed as a horrible aggravation of that punishment. The souls whom he has destroyed will be his eternal companions and from the stare of madness and rage and revenge which they fix upon him not even the blackness of darkness can hide him. Oh my hearers while yet prisoners of hope flee from the sceptic's snares or his doom in perdition will be yours. Drink not in that poison which kills the soul. Oh there is no judgment of God so dreadful in this world as that which gives a man *up to strong delusions to believe a lie that he might be damned!*

*[The following is from a sheet attached on top of the first page of the sermon. It may be part of another alternate ending.]*

...and fled for their lives.

My Christian brethren you are well aware that the cause of Christ is still in Gethsemane that is it is enduring the onsets of men and of devils. You know also how dear that cause is to your Saviour dearer far than his life and how intently he is watching its fate and its progress. You see likewise how many of his disciples whom he calls on to watch and pray with him in behalf of that cause are slumbering at their posts. And then there is the whole world lying in wickedness in whose hearts there is no sympathy with Jesus Christ. Now when you leave the communion board today you can take your choice in what direction to go. You can if you please – alas how many do thus please - avoid Gethsemane altogether and when you go among the enemies of Christ a shout of welcome will greet you. Or you can go and stretch yourselves on the flowery beds of ease where siren voices will lull you to repose and his cause will be forgotten in oblivious slumber. Or you can listen to the call of your Saviour and go with him to the garden and there stand up with shield and sword by his side. Ah I read in every eye the noble determination never to desert the Captain of your salvation since he did not desert you in your deepest extremity. Go then with a resolute heart and determine never to shrink from the conflict so long as your Saviour cheers you by his presence and that will be till death; for so says he, *I am with you always even unto the end.* Nor will the conflict be long or the victory uncertain and then the crown of glory awaits you which never fades away.



Delivered

At Yale College 1819 Saturday evening meeting

At Amherst College June 1834

At Amherst College February 1838

At Amherst College July 1841

## Sermon 534 [Prosperity the Ruin of Mankind]

[Deuteronomy 32:15, 1824 Dec,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series B, Box 9: folder 1]

Deuteronomy 32:15

*But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick,  
thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly  
esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*

*[This includes two complete sermons. Sermon 534A (about 18 pages) is a history of human civilization and how prosperity has been the ruin of mankind. Sermon 534B, on gray paper, applies the same thinking to Amherst College and then to the United States. It includes discussions of slavery, injustice to American Indians, and the war with Mexico, as well as violations of the Sabbath. The Nebraska Kansas Bill mentioned near the end was 1854 which corresponds with the last date on which this sermon was delivered at Amherst College.]*

The rhetoric of the bible is in general such as to call forth the approbation and even admiration of the most fastidious criticism. The sacred writers however do not always conform to every minute prescription of refined taste. They had a higher object in view than mere literary elegance to amuse the votaries of literature viz. to instruct and impress the great mass of mankind and therefore they never sacrificed sense to sound nor neglected an illustration provided it was and just and appropriate because it might to some minds have the appearance of triteness and vulgarity. To the fastidious critic perhaps the text might seem to labour under an objection of this kind, containing an allusion too coarse and common to be relished by the tasteful and polite - especially in poetry. For the text is a part of the animated song with which Moses concluded his public labours among the Israelites. That nation are described under the name of Jeshurun, signifying the *upright one*, and Moses in the text intends forcibly to represent the powerful influence prosperity had exerted upon them in alienating them from God and a more striking illustration of their conduct could scarcely be made than by reference then to the stalled and fattened horse or ox. Every one familiar with these animals knows how fierce and ungovernable they become the more care and nourishment is given them and how peculiarly prone under such circumstances they are to lift their heel against their master. If this figure then lacks any thing in delicacy it gains vastly more in appropriateness and force.

From the particular instance mentioned in the text I infer the general principle that *prosperity has a powerful tendency to alienate the human heart from virtue and from God and consequently to bring ruin upon men*. It will be my effort on this occasion to illustrate this principle by examples derived from the history of the world.

First in the history of nations

Secondly from the history the church

Thirdly from the history of smaller civil communities and particular churches

And fourthly from the history of individuals.

Did time permit it would be interesting and profitable before proceeding to address the several histories to enquire how it comes to pass that the tendency of prosperity is to lead men from purity and God. How does it happen that a constant stream of mercy from heaven should produce forgetfulness and alienation instead of gratitude and firmer attachment? That such would not be the effect on holy beings is most evident - every new blessing they receive excites a warmer affection to the giver and calls forth a louder note of praise. But man is a sinner having a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: and this fact explains that once the ground of this strange effect of prosperity. He is led thereby to forget his dependance upon God and to trust in his own strength and is thus brought within the reach of many new and powerful temptations and his disordered and perverse heart yields to their influence. The goodness of God leads him to presume still further upon the divine forbearance and thus the paradoxical assertion of Solomon becomes true that *because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*.

But I proceed in the illustration of the principle inferred from the text. First I shall offer some examples from the history of nations.

Although the history of the antediluvian world as given in scripture is short (and this is the only history of that period extant worthy of credit) yet one fact is strongly marked in it viz. the extreme wickedness and violence that filled the earth. We may not be able to ascertain all the causes of general corruption: but two facts stated by Moses lead us to conclude that peculiar prosperity had a large share in producing it. All the world at that time spoke but one language. This we should suppose was a great blessing and would greatly facilitate the means of communication between different communities. But it would also increase the means of corruption: it would enable men to form more powerful combinations for ambitious purposes and thus swell them with self-sufficiency and obliterate a sense of dependance upon the Divine Being. Another circumstance which in itself considered was a signal blessing but which yet tended more strongly to foster corruption was the extreme longevity of the antediluvians. Even at this day when life is but a span longest we all see the powerful influence which the expectation of a few years exerts in destroying religious impressions and then in fixing the affections of the world. Take away the fear of death from them and I had almost said you take away religion from the earth. And if men even now are alienated from God by the expectations of life how much more powerful must have been the sentiment upon the antediluvians who looked forward to six or seven or eight or even nine hundred years!

That these two circumstances were powerful causes of that universal corruption and violence with which the earth was filled is obvious from the fact that God as a punishment and preventative of future excesses of the like kind reduce the limit of man's life first to 120 years and then to 70: and he also produced a confusion of languages at Babel in order to defeat the ambitious schemes of the builders to scatter them over the earth. The antediluvian world therefore is a case illustrative of the principle of this discourse.

And the history of Babel just referred to furnishes us with another similar example. The men of those times must have been in a state of high prosperity or they would never have said, *Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth*. From last part of the sentence *let us make us a name* it appears that an unhallowed ambition growing out of their sense of independance and fullness was the moving cause for undertaking this mad enterprise. This appears still farther from the words of the Lord when he said, *Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do*. To check this ambitious

daring and proud defiance of God the oneness of their language a rich blessing if improved must be taken from them and they be compelled to wander into the wilderness and with labour and patience build up separate societies not rich enough to make any more similar attempts.

The records of the Jewish nation contain little else than a succession of gross apostacies from God in consequence of the prosperity they enjoyed. No people were ever so much under the peculiar care of heaven as these, and their ingratitude and perverseness seem to have risen in proportion to their blessings. The impression was deep on their minds that they were the favourites of heaven and it was more than pride could bear. Witness their strange conduct at the foot of Mount Sinai and worshipping a golden calf while yet Moses was in the mount and the glory of the Lord sat on its top like devouring fire. During the fifty days previous they had seen the mightiest miracles performed by Jehovah in opening the Red Sea for their passage and closing it upon the Egyptians and in supplying them with water from the rock and manna from heaven: and now in the presence of the awful glories of Sinai they fell away to idolatry! Surely they must of been intoxicated with a sense of their own superior importance or this could never have been. Yet this is but a faithful picture of what there is in the human heart. Who does not exclaim, *is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?*

There is no time to trace the story of the Hebrews through the centuries of their national existence. But whoever will read it as given in scripture will find an almost endless succession of cases similar to that of the golden calf at Sinai succeeded by similar judgments. Moses in the text does not seem to refer to any particular instance of aberration from God through the influence of prosperity but gives the general character of the Jews. By a dexterous change of tense he embraces the past and the future and would represent the alternate succession of prosperity and adversity with which their history is checkered. The latter coming upon them in the righteous judgment of heaven as a punishment for their abuse of the former.

In turning our eyes towards ancient Egypt we find so much of fable and extravagance clouding her history that it seems hardly safe to derive from thence any examples applicable to this subject. If however anything be true concerning her famous conqueror Sesostrius it is the statement of historians that immediately after his extensive conquests by which his grandeur and riches were greatly promoted the kingdom began to decay – thus adding another instance of the corrupting influence of prosperity.

Still thicker is the obscurity that rests on the records of the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian empire - unless the history of the tower of Babel be included in them. Upon Phoenicia whose principal cities were Tyre and Sidon the judgment of God fell with an overwhelming power and the prophet Ezekiel thus assigns the reasons of God's sore visitation - *By thy great wisdom and by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason or thy brightness: I cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.*

The Carthaginians being descended from the Phoenicians inherited their commercial Spirit which caused the tide of wealth to flow into their coffers and with this a portion of their ancestral effeminacy corruption and consequent weakness. It was here that Hannibal whom neither the snows and rocks of the Alps nor the power of Rome could conquer was subdued by the luxury of Capua and it was hence that the savage threat *delenda est Carthago* - Carthage must be destroyed - was finally carried into execution.

Who has not heard of the luxury and splendor and corruption of a Persian court? Yet Persia was once a powerful brave and for a heathen a virtuous people. But her successes and her riches by seducing her from the path of virtue sunk her into a state of weakness and effeminacy a condition little better than annihilation from which she has never recovered and never will recover until her ancient virtue is restored.

But Greece - the land of literature and art and science - the land of poets philosophers and orators - of heroes and statesmen - she too furnishes more than one melancholy instance of the everlasting and demoralizing power of prosperity. Among the numerous little republics that occupied her soil who is not familiar with Sparta and Athens? And who has not read of the Lycurgus of the one and of the Solon of the other: and of those most rigid laws they framed for the people out of those virtuous and temperate habits adopted by the citizens? So long as these two republics adhered to these laws and habits they gradually rose in power and wealth and civilization: so that small as they were they could scatter the five millions of Xerxes who poured in on them like a mighty flood as Thermopylae and Plataea and Marathon and Salamis can testify. But at length their successes and conquests introduced ambition pride and luxury and they were led to trample on the institutions of their great lawgivers and thus they paved the way for their final downfall. With the conquest of Lysander and the introduction into his country of the love of riches and luxury began the declension of Sparta and it continued until finally she sunk into that all devouring vortex the Roman empire. Athens had first an age of Solon or of the laws secondly an age of glory or that of Themistocles and Aristides thirdly an age of luxury and corruption on that of Pericles: and so deeply and rapidly did she sink that when attacked by the Macedonian Philip and exposed to impending ruin not even the thunders of Demosthenes could rouse her to vigorous action. She fell and for more than 2000 years she has been with all the rest of Greece has been wearing away an iron age of servitude and degradation and melancholy contrast to the golden days of service of her history. Long and dismal has been the night of her humiliation: but if I mistake not the moving star at length dawns upon her - may we not hope that she has amply atoned for her guilt in abusing her prosperity! And who does not pray that the galling Ottoman fetters which she has burst asunder will never be permitted by a righteous providence to be riveted again.

In descending along the path of our world history and taking leave of the Grecian age of glory the Roman Empire like a mighty giant occupies the whole field of vision and engrosses the page of history for many a revolving century. That people rose from a state of poverty and want to an unexampled pitch of prosperity and grandeur by the power of a rigid discipline. Their early manners were marked by great severity and by frugality temperance and industry. They were in fact a nation of soldiers and inured to toil and privation at home no difficulties were insurmountable abroad. Their empire spread on every side and one conquest inspired an ambition for another until the world and the Roman Empire became synonymous terms. But at length their conquests began to react upon themselves and the wealth and luxury of the nations they conquered being conveyed to Rome effectually subdued that people whose arms had been invincible. Soon as the effeminate habits of the Asiatic began to succeed to the stern virtues of Encas and Romulus the glory and the strength of the empire began to wane. They who could bear the scorching sands of Porthia and the Siroc of Africa - sink emaciated beneath the soft breezes that blew from the bowers of wealth and luxury. They who breasted the icy flood of poverty and peril yielded at once when the tide of prosperity rolled in upon them and suffered themselves to be borne irresistibly along towards the gulf of perdition. In vain did the Gracchi - in vain did Brutus and Cassius and Cato sacrifice themselves in attempting to check Rome's downward course. The colossal pile began to crumble in every part but especially at its center where corruption had risen to an enormous height and the flames of civil war raged with tenfold fury. A military despotism soon succeeded the republic for

nothing less energetic than despotic power could hold together the disjointed mass. But still the flood of luxury continued to rise and the empire continued to hasten to decay until the hordes of northern barbarians pouring in like a second deluge of the world finished the catastrophe. Imperial Rome with all her pomp and glory sank beneath the sword of the Hun and the Goths and the Vandal leaving the history of her ruin the most striking on record - to warn succeeding nations of the danger of national prosperity - and leaving the world to endure a long night of barbarism and ignorance.

The conquerors of Rome however did not profit by her example: but though possessing as they did the sterner virtues and apparently insensible to the charms of wealth and luxury, they yielded to the contagion of dissoluteness and sinking into the lap of ease and indulgence have left their names added to the list of nations who have fallen victims to success.

But modern nations have not much improved by all the admonitions of the sort sent down to them from antiquity. The same principle still holds as true as ever that national prosperity and corruption go hand in hand and ruin follows in the train. It would require a volume to detail all instances modern history develops of the truth of this proposition. I could point you to Charlemagne with all his wisdom virtue and glory – reigning over not only France but also Germany the Low Countries and part of Hungary Spain and Italy - and enquire why it was that from the period of his reign France began a retrograde march until by civil and foreign wars and internal corruption she went to an almost total decay? It was her extensive conquests her prosperity. Or look at the reign of Louis XIV. Never did France rise higher in arts in arms in literature and magnificence than when he wore the crown. But trace down her history a little farther and see the results. By the tyranny and success of Louis 14 - the seeds of revolution were sown in the breasts of the people: and the licentiousness of his successor served only to foster immorality and rebellion. The final result was the tremendous volcanic explosion called the French Revolution which shook Europe to its center and poured over every land the flame of discord and the withering blast of infidelity and atheism.

Look to Spain and compare her greatness during the days of the Emperor Charles V with her present degraded and miserable condition. And must you not impute the difference in a great measure to the inundating tide of wealth that flowed in upon her from the mines of Mexico and South America?

I might add numerous other instances of a similar character to illustrate the first head of the discourse. But I have already shown you how almost infallibly great national prosperity leads away a people not only from God but from virtue and paves the way for wretchedness and ruin. I hasten secondly to illustrate the same principle from the history of the church.

I pass by the earlier date of the church and come directly to the period that succeeded Christ from which a striking illustration may be obtained. You know how furious was the wrath of the Jews against the Saviour and his disciples how it terminated in his crucifixion and the destruction of multitudes of his followers soon after. Yet that was the period when the church grew and there were daily added to it many more than the sword of persecution destroyed. But soon after the Saviour had risen to glory the heathen world and especially the powerful emperors of Rome united with the Jews and made a violent onset upon the despise followers of the Nazarene. And when we read of the immense numbers that fell sacrifice to their bloodthirsty enemies we can hardly believe that the church was not extinguished. But strange to tell she was all this time multiplying in her numbers. Like the burning brush - or like Shadrach Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace of Babylon. The church remained unconsumed although the fires of persecution raged with sevenfold fury and Phoenix-like from the blood of every martyr a new Spirit and a new host arose to vindicate the cause of truth. Ten successive times within the period of 300

years did the might men of the earth renew the onset upon the church in ten times did she rise from the blood of her children with renovated strength. The Her Saviour faithful to his promise stood by her in the hour of trial and shielded her head in the day of battle. Strange as it may seem even in the midst of the most frequent opposition the religion of Christ within 300 years force its way into every part of the Roman Empire and even into the palaces of the Caesars and in the year 323 the Roman Emperor Constantine avowed his belief in the Christian religion and made it the popular religion of the empire. Mark now the contrast. Till then the gospel had been received in its purity and its professors were wholly harmless undefiled and separate from sinners. But from that period true religion began rapidly to decline. Dangerous heresies invaded the church - its discipline became lax and though the form of godliness remained its power rapidly departed. *Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked - then he forsook God which made him and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.* Popery ere long deluged the church with its complicated abominations and a night came over her which waxed deeper and deeper for more than ten centuries. In the history of those ages we read a painful lesson of the deadly effect of prosperity upon the church. The horrid abominations of the man of sin continued to swell and multiply till the cup of his iniquity was full and Almighty God once more appeared to vindicate his name and his truth.

But popery had too strong a hold upon the corruptions of the human heart to be displaced without a violent struggle. When therefore protestants came within its power never did persecution assume a more horrid form or demand so many victims. Not less than 50 million fell prey to the sword of the Roman Pontiff (clamor of bigotry and intolerance) and the racks and flames of the inquisition. And what was the consequence? Protestantism and pure religion made a rapid progress. The torch of inquisitorial frenzy blazed in France and and Holland in England and Ireland and Scotland yet their true religion flourished. Persecution at length ceased and religious freedom succeeded in those countries to a good degree. And what has been the consequence? In some of the very countries in which during the days of the Reformation and the persecution shone many a bright example of pure religion little else can now be found but the form of godliness without its power. In France the land of the Huguenots to meet with a devoted Christian is becoming as rare and cheering as to find an oasis in the desert of Africa. And in Germany the cradle of the reformation a refined naturalism or modified atheism carries away multitudes.

*[The following paragraph is crossed out in pencil in the original (right panel of page 9).]*

Compare too the present state of the English episcopal or established church with what it was in the days when papacy oppressed it and persecuted it. I know indeed that there are many in that church the glory of the age - the glory of Christianity. I know that all her members profess the true faith of the Gospel and I admire many their formularies. But I know too because the godly members of her own body declare it and declare it with a loud voice that there are great very great abuses and corruptions in the system and if there be not a redeeming power (and I know too that those abuses and corruptions proceed from that worldly prosperity she enjoys by monopolizing their form of government) in her pious members Roman papacy and English Episcopacy will ere long stand upon a level.

Prosperity then tends powerfully to alienate God and corrupt nations and the church general. I say thirdly it has a similar effect upon smaller communities and upon particular churches - as their history testifies.

By smaller civil communities I mean those clusters of men constituting the parts of a nation or kingdom or state whom either a similarity of interests or national facilities have collected together. I mean for instance the states that constitute a republic or the cities and small towns that make up the nation.

These taken separately may be in a prosperous condition even when the nation as a whole is going to ruin. Nay it is not infrequent that such bodies of men build themselves up on the ruins of the country. And I say that prosperity exerts a like dangerous corruption in reference to upon the smaller communities as upon nations. The history of large cities supports perhaps the best illustration of this position.

And hear the five cities of the plain Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar four of which were burned beneath the shower of fire and brimstone recur to the recollection. God by his prophet Ezekiel has told us what was the nature of the crime of Sodom and this probably was similar to that of the others. *Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.* The fullness of bread here mention was a sufficient cause for the pride and abundance of idleness and haughtiness and commission of abominations which brought down upon them the judgment of heaven.

A similar cause has provoked a righteous Providence to visit other cities with as severe scourges. Rarely hast a city risen higher in splendor and magnificence than ancient Babylon which Isaiah calls the glory of kingdoms. But her pride and corruption kept pace with her grandeur: and God pronounced her doom and finally executed it. *Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of mine heritage, because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls; Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: because of the wrath of the Lord it shall not be inhabited, but shall be wholly desolate.*

Jerusalem which increased in sin as it increased in prosperity furnishes another example of a city ruined by prosperity. Eminent instances of the same character were Tyre and Sidon. So remarkable were the inhabitants of Tyre for riches that Isaiah calls them princes. But Ezekiel tells the effect of that wealth. *By thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches and thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches. Thou hast at thy heart as the heart of God.*

Terrible was the judgment that was visited upon this city for such an abuse of prosperity. In ancient Rome there was collected the wealth of splendors almost the whole world and probably in no other place has sin reigned more triumphantly or assumed so many forms as in that city. Suffice it to say that it has been for centuries the very focus of papal abominations.

Where is it in modern times that we look for iniquity in its most repulsive aspect? It is in the metropolis of the empire - in the place where commerce and manufacturers have poured in a stream of wealth and learnings and art have performed their most glorious deeds. What city of Europe is there - and I may add of America too - in which sin has not amassed a prominence and a grossness and boldness that shocks every better feeling and makes the good man tremble lest a second deluge of fire and brimstone should be visited upon them? Even London with all her benevolence and charity and I may add piety too is a vast sink of heart rendering crime and abomination. In that city 115,000 human beings obtain their subsistence by fraud and annual plunder their fellow man of nearly nine millions of dollars. And if such is London what shall I say of Paris where there are annually committed more than 600 suicides - and 150 murders where more than 600 divorces take place every year and where more than 800 abominable stews are licensed - *Alas alas, says a late traveler, Paris is a hopeless scene - populous and splendid as it is and rich in the sublimest productions of human genius it is a spiritual desert a moral waste. The life of God does not animate its people - the voice of prayer is not heard in its dwellings - its public haunts are thronged by practical if not avowed atheists...and perhaps it is not exaggeration to say that a man of*



*lively devotion and of genuine piety in Paris is (with the exception of a traveler) as great a rarity as a civilized being in the wilds of Africa. [Source: Letters of Thomas Raffles, 1817]*

If we descend still lower in the history of communities and observe the rise and progress of those small towns and villages which have rapidly flourished and become wealthy who does not know that corruption is almost every case has kept pace with the prosperity? With scarcely a single exception dissipation and refinement in sin have been proportioned to the influx of wealth security and peace. Our American cities might here be described especially on commercial matters and they would present the like sad picture. But time does not permit

The like sad picture (history) is presented by individual churches on which the smiles and the blessings of God have copiously descended. Whose thoughts do not recur to the seven churches of Asia? They have sunk into the devouring vortex of the world and their faith and patience and charity exist only on record. Because of their downfall is clearly exhibited by the inspired writer in giving the character of the Laodiceans – *Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.* The blessings of heaven have been converted into nourishment for their pride while in fact in vital godliness they were so deficient that their danger was imminent.

In these latter days God sometimes blesses particular churches by pouring out on them the special influences of his Spirit and multitudes are brought to possess and profess religion. And what is the usual consequence? If the human heart were not made up of paradox and depravity the effect would be to render Christians more humble and devoted to God. But generally it leads them to feel secure and strong in themselves and forget their dependance upon him and they abandon him and rush into the world to serve it with greater eagerness than ever. They wax fat and forget God and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation.

Fourthly the history of individual shows that prosperity has a dangerous and alienated effect upon them.

Were I to do full justice to this part of the subject I should present before you the history of every man from the beginning till now on whom the sun of temporal prosperity has shown. For it is doubtful whether one such can be found whom the increase of prospects or reputation or influence did not induce to think of himself above what he ought to think and thus to alienate him from God. How many are the instances within the recollection of almost every man in which a person has sustained the character of a good citizen kind and compassionate in his feelings and conduct while in low circumstances and in obscurity or struggling with enemies and with difficulties but when those circumstances changed competence and public favour and reputation exalted him to a higher station he has become proud overbearing oppressive and insolent. Nay what is still worse we are sometimes called to witness a similar change in a man who while moving in a humble sphere appeared to be a devoted Christian. But a tide of prosperity flows in upon him and he becomes intoxicated with success and yields to the temptation and his apparent goodness and heavenly mindedness pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew.

Among the individuals on record would most strikingly exemplified the doctrine of this discourse Nebuchadnezzar stands preeminent. How must his heart have swelled with vanity and self-importance well-nigh to bursting when he *walketh in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon and said, is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?* It needed seven years of humiliation as deep as being turned forth to graze with the beasts

of the field and to have his body wet with the dew of heaven till his hairs were grown like eagles feathers and his nails like birds claws ere such pride and madness could be cured.

From the Jewish history many instances to exemplify this dangerous influence of prosperity on individuals might be collected. Suffice it to mention that Solomon endured by God with a wisdom unequaled among men and who spent the greater part of his life in the service of religion this monarch was seduced by strange women in the latter years of his life to join in the worship of idols - yes in the latter part of life - as he stood tottering over the grave and only a step separated him from the judgment seat of Jehovah he denied the religion of his fathers and bowed down to vile idols. What else but worldly grandeur and pleasure could have transformed a saint into a heathen?

Remember too the case of Noah the man who had seen so much of God's mercies and judgments and who had himself been the most distinguished monument of grace the world ever saw see him after the waters of the deluge had dried up and his vineyard brought forth abundantly overtaken by a beastly intoxication.

Alexander the great (as he is most improperly called unless it refer to greatness in crime and folly) was borne along by a fuller and more rapid current of success than perhaps any other mortal: insomuch that his contemptible country would have dignified him with an apotheosis before his death. But he could not bear the elevation to which he was raised - he became dizzy and headlong he plunged downward like Lucifer never to rise anymore in his mighty empire vanished like a dream.

Did ever a puny mortal appear more contemptible or more inflated with pride or more intoxicated with power than the Persian Xerxes when with his five millions he invaded Greece! He had ordered a bridge of boats to be constructed across the Hellespont that his army might pass from Asia into Europe. But it was no sooner erected than a violent tempest swept it away. The enraged and bloated tyrant beheaded those who had constructed the bridge and with despotic madness vented his wrath against the elements. He commanded the Hellespont be punished with 300 lashes and a pair of fetters to be dropped into it with these ridiculous words - the very froth of vanity and essence of blasphemy - *It is thus thou salt and bitter water, that thy master punishes thy unprovoked injury and he is determined to pass thy treacherous streams notwithstanding all the insolence of my malice.*

Yet my hearers we have seen in our modern times the intoxication of success foaming forth its own shame and nearly as extravagant a degree in that man who for twenty years filled Europe with alarm convulsion misery and death. Even in the early part of his career when he swept like a whirlwind over the plains of Egypt with daring blasphemy he told the Egyptians in a proclamation, *I could call to an account each individual amongst you for the most secret sentiment of his heart for I know every thing even that which you never communicated to any person.* But with all his omniscience he was conquered by his victories and the fires of Moscow were but a prelude to those fires conscience kindled in his bosom to consume him in a distant island of the sea - and whether they terminated this life or became the unquenchable fire in another world God only knows.

But to dwell no longer on instances derived from history permit me my hearers to appeal directly into your own hearts and your own experience for the truth of this discourse. I appeal to everyone of whom prosperity has lavished her gifts by the bestowment of health or riches or reputation, whether as you waxed fat you did not find within you a strong disposition to forget the God that made you and lightly to esteem the rock of your salvation? Did not your hearts ere you were aware of it begin to swell with self-importance and self-sufficiency and to feel secure and become alienated from the service of God? I ask

you Christian especially whether an influx of riches or honors did not render your closet more undesirable and unfrequented spot and divest your bible of many of its charms and thrown over the service of religion a repulsiveness before unknown and finally did it not diminish a sense of religion within you and place you among those who had forgotten their first love and followed their Saviour with a hesitating distance step?

My hearers when I commenced this subject I was not aware that I had undertaken a history of the human race. But in fact that history is mainly made up of the description of man's abuse of the blessings of heaven and the judgments that followed. Almost every page the historian has written furnishes some fact illustrative of the principle of this discourse that prosperity has a powerful tendency to alienate the human heart from virtue and from God. But notwithstanding this who of us is there that does not seek and strive for worldly prosperity with all his energies as if it were the supreme good and shudder at worldly adversity as if it contained in it the essence of all misery! But if this discourse be true who ought not rather to tremble when he is basking in the warm sun of prosperity lest the bright day he enjoys be but the prelude to an overpowering tempest. If this discourse be true then what occasion have those who (on this Thanksgiving occasion) are clad in the vestments of mourning and those whose worldly prospects are dark - what occasion have they to rejoice that they are not exposed (at least) to the fatal influence of prosperity!

My hearers the principle of this discourse is true. Then let these United States beware of the danger - we are a prosperous nation - prosperous almost beyond example. And the discerning eye when it compares the moral condition of our country now with what it was in the early days of our fathers (and observed how the elements of our union are often brought into painful collision) perceives the corrupting and demoralizing influence of our rising greatness and success. Ah my country was so many examples before you will you not take the warning and guard against the fatal end of Athens and Sparta and Roman. Around the rock on which they split are the wrecks of a multitude of nations. Towards that rock I fear I fear your course is laid. Oh that a second Washington might seize the helm and turn from the fatal spot.

The principle of this discourse is true. Then let the Christian church in our land (throughout the world) beware. For she too was in a prosperous condition. If she wishes to escape the fires of persecution - the method God usually employs to purify his church - let her not forget the rock of her salvation.

This discourse is true. Then let our larger cities see the horrid gulf into which they are plunging unless the leaven of corruption that no well nigh leavens the whole lump be purged out. They ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah Tyre in Babylon stand like so many beacons to warn them of their ruin and their remedy.

*[Two paragraphs are crossed out in pencil and are omitted from the transcription.]*

The principle of this discourse is true. Then let every individual enjoying worldly prosperity - health friends and competence if not superfluity - set up a double guard against that seductive influence with which he is surrounded and which has cast down many a strong man wounded and hurried many others to eternal perdition. Let them not forget the inspired declaration that *the prosperity of fools shall destroy them* and that he who trusts in his own heart however wise in intellect is a fool.

The principle of this discourse is true. Then let those individuals and communities who are called to pass through trials and straits take courage and exercise a cheerful confidence in the wisdom and mercy of God. So often and so decidedly do the scriptures declare afflictions and sufferings to be an evidence that

God loves us that did we value as we ought his love and favours we could not but rejoice the moment we begin to enter the furnace. It may not be proper for men to pray for afflictions because he does not know that they will prove beneficial. It is better to leave himself in the hands of God: but in view of the intent imminent dangers attending upon prosperity he may say

*Cast me not off Almighty Lord  
But use thy rod not thy sword  
The cross no longer I declare  
But save him from the wrath divine.*

And yet when a man prays to be made holy and to be prepared for heaven he does in fact pray for afflictions if God choose to take that method of making him holy. When therefore trials come instead of being disconsolate and dejected and disposed to murmur he ought to regard it as an indication that God has not forsaken him. For adversity is a friend in disguise.

*Scared at thy frown terrific, fly  
Self-pleasing Folly's idle brood,  
Wild Laughter, Noise, and thoughtless Joy,  
And leave us leisure to be good.  
Light they disperse, and with them go  
The summer friend, the flattering foe;  
By vain Prosperity received,  
To her they vow their truth, and are again believed.*

*Wisdom, in sable garb arrayed,  
Immersed in rapturous thought profound,  
And Melancholy, silent maid,  
With leaden eye, that loves the ground,  
Still on thy solemn steps attend:  
Warm Charity, the general friend,  
With Justice, to herself severe,  
And Pity, dropping soft the sadly-pleasing tear.*

*[Source: Hymn to Adversity, Thomas Gray, 1742]*

And the effect of adversity and trial upon communities (literary institutions) and nations is no less salutary if rightly improved than upon the individuals. It is the way which God usually takes to render a community happy and a literary institution useful. When have nations been most distinguished for noble deeds and mighty efforts? In almost every instance soon after they came out of the furnace of affliction. And what public benevolent institutions have been most useful and distinguished? Those whose foundations were cemented by tears and whose walls have been built by men who like Nehemiah and his companions were compelled to hold a weapon of defense in one hand while the other they wrought in the work. No individual no community no institution no nation need to faint in the day of adversity if they can truly say to *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea: Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof – For God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.*

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*[This may be the end of the original sermon. The following ten paragraphs appear to be alternative endings or inserts intended for different audiences.]*

*[A paragraph has been crossed out and is omitted from the transcription.]*

Ah if there be not a greater than Washington to guide our course between the many Scyllas and Charybdis frowning before us ever many more thanksgivings come I fear we shall be dashed upon the rocks on one side or swallowed up in the whirlpool on the other.

Lord hold thou us up and then we shall be safe! But we ought not to forget when we thus pray that the God with whom we plead is the same God into whose ears the cry of the poor persecuted exiled Indian enters daily - the same God who could not but hear the prayer of the lately imprisoned missionaries - the same God who has so long heard the stifled groans of the trodden down slave. The same God who has never yet failed to punish national sins with national judgments.

...condition with that of others we find ourselves as much as the majority of men blessed let us recollect that we are in danger of that alienation from God prosperity brings along with it. Let us remember to that this is a day of humiliation fasting and prayer that by such services alone we can hope to be defended from our danger and delivered from our temptations. When afflictions and judgments press upon men they are ready enough to unite in keeping a fast and they keep it in sincerity. But whoever thought of observing a fast because he was in a state of prosperity? Yet it if this discourse be true there is more danger and consequently more need of fasting and prayer in a prosperous than in an adverse condition. I need not then call upon the afflicted to observe this day. The Providence of God has already spoken to them in a louder voice than mine. But those who are waxing fat in worldly comforts or riches or honours I testify that *the goodness of God leadeth to repentance* - that is such is its natural tendency upon holy beings: but if they find their experience to be the reverse of this then do I warn them that their prosperity is leading them to ruin.

The principle of this discourse is true. Then we see the horrid gulf into which our larger lives are plunging unless the leaven now at work in them shall be purged out. And the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah Tyre and Babylon stand so many mouldering wrecks to warn them of their ruin and their remedy.

But to bring the subject near home I do not fear that any will deny the principle of this discourse. Then permit me to remind the College in this place of its danger. While it was struggling for existence - while it had to contend with the powers that be for a recognition of its just rights - nay in the forefront of the hottest battle this Institution had little to fear. Nor is there now any reason to fear its extinction. But is there not danger of something worse? God has remarkably prospered it and turned the hearts of men towards it: and what if that prosperity should alienate it from God and induce it to forget the principles on which it was founded and make it a fountain of error instead of truth - to send forth over the land the streams of death instead of life! Alas there are not wanting instances in which similar institutions have been converted from blessings into curses! *[Bottom edge of page is torn and unreadable.]*....what [????] this institution from watchfulness...

*[Inserted sheet]*

I know indeed that the general cry now is that instead of prosperity want and ruin stare us in the face. Yes and this too at the very moment when the national government is about to distribute among the people 40 millions of surplus revenue - a fact unexampled in the history of the world. Nevertheless the fear is that we are going to be starved - and yet at the very time 20,000 bushels of grain equal to about 50,000 barrels of flour per year are monthly consumed in the distilleries of a single city: and these distilleries could not be kept in operation did not luxury and intemperance create a demand for their products. Truly if we are to be starved it will be starvation by prosperity.

*[End of insert]*

How ruinous of and especially is it that a war of foreign conquest can be carried on without rebuke year after year and thousands on thousands pour into the deadly vortex while the people at home shout the praises of the successful leader and at once cry out for his elevation to the highest post of political distinction. Ah, why should we be so regardless of the fatal end of the ancient republics when we see before us the very rock on which they were wrecked! Alas prosperity has so blinded our eyes that we do not see that our course is laid toward the same fatal spot. Oh that a second Washington or rather a greater than Washington would seize the helm and turn us towards the open sea!

The principle of this discourse is true. Then should not this institution hear its monitory voice? For though we have had no prosperity to boast of we have had of late enough to be very thankful for. The season of our depression and adversity has indeed been long and trying; and now that God has turned our captivity it would be ungrateful not to acknowledge it. But let us not forget that though it often takes a great deal of diversity to save a man or institution it takes very little prosperity to ruin them. We can also bear a great amount of trials and grow stronger and better under them: lest we should be afraid of a very small amount of success. We should remember that the very men who are ruined by it are usually ignorant of its effect upon them. Let us then see to it that we are not thus deceived and betrayed. What if our temporal prosperity so desirable as a means of greater good and so pleasant too after protracted trials - what if it should lead us to feel less our dependance on God and our need of special grace? What if we should be satisfied with these outward blessings and the church here should cease to plead for the special presence of the Holy Spirit? And as the consequence of God should say, *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.* Oh how much better the severest trials with God's presence than the highest prosperity without it! Should we thus most foolishly compel God to depart from us and revivals of religion should no more visit us our present prosperity would be the greatest curse that ever came upon us. As individuals and as a community we are strongly tempted to do this. Nay it needs an eye but half open to see the leaven already beginning to work. But though thus easily discerned in others it needs the eyes of augurs to see it in ourselves. Oh God hold thou us up and then and then only shall we be safe. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

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*[Start of second sermon? Gray paper]*

Beginning on page 534B (1)

But waiving the application of my discourse to individuals let me direct its monitory lessons to this Institution. For though we have no outward prosperity to boast of, we have for several years had enough to be very thankful for. Those of us who have known the college in its darker days and have passed with it through its trying years for poverty and destitution, inadequate means of instruction, while neglect and insult were its portion, would be ungrateful indeed not to recognize God's goodness in turning our captivity, by raising up liberal and efficient friends. But we should not forget that though it often takes a great deal of adversity to save a man, or an institution, it generally requires very little prosperity to ruin them. We can all bear a great amount of trials and grow stronger and better under them: lest we should be afraid of a small portion only of success. And let us remember that the very men and institutions that are ruined by it, are usually ignorant of its deadly influence. What if such should be our condition! What if even our comparative prosperity, so desirable as affording means for a more elevated course of instruction, should lead us to feel less our dependance on God and our need of special grace! What if satisfied with outward blessings, with increased means of literacy and scientific instruction, the church should cease to plead for the special presence of the Holy Spirit? Alas it needs an eye but half open to see the heaven already at work. Bumps though so easy to discover it in others, what an augur's eye it needs to discern it in our own hearts. Oh what occasion today for humiliation and self-condemnation when we look back upon our Spiritual condition during the term now drawing to a close - a term almost always marked by a solemn interest in religious things at least among the professors of piety; but this year equally marked by the absence of such feelings and the prevalence of a worldly spirit. Christian brethren, we have been preparing work for long and bitter repentance. The memory of this term will carry with it a poisonous sting to many a Christian heart. For we shall have reason to fear that our unfaithfulness may have forever ruined immortal men.

My second application of the subject is to the United States. For we are in a nation prosperous beyond example: nor can any discerning man that has watched the course of events for a few years past fail to see the blighting influence of our prosperity upon our moral and religious character. To the man of three score, the progress of our country in wickedness of almost every name seems appalling, when he compares the present standard of individual and national morality and religion with what they were forty years ago. I know that many a good cause has also made rapid progress: though I fear not as the same rate as the influences that are evil. It was a grand object with our fathers and keep our country free from many of those fearful corruptions and daring sins that have rested and still rest so heavily upon many European lands. But with the increase of our wealth and power, these very evils have been pouring in upon us like a flood, and the freedom from restraint which we now enjoy has given us a bad preeminence in many of those vices and practices which our fathers looked upon with such abhorrence on the other side of the Atlantic. But I would refer at this time only to those national acts that show the perverting and debasing influence of our prosperity in outward circumstances. I shall mention only a few of the most prominent.

1. Our prosperity has led us to trample on the sabbath. That institution stood in the way it was thought of success in our pursuit of gain, and therefore the national government through its post office, commanded its agents to labour in defiance of the Divine Command, which says six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work etc. No matter though this desecration be limited to certain thoroughfares for it is enough to have a law upon the statute books that comes into direct conflict with the law of God. Nor could anything but the recklessness and infatuation of prosperity have led the Congress of a great nation thus deliberately to set at defiance the authority of Jehovah. Very few of the despots of Europe would dare to do it.

2. Our prosperity has led us to trample on the rights of the Indian. Ninety nine hundredths of this country, originally all his, had been in one way or another wrested from him. But a few tribes having been in a measure civilized and Christianized, through the the labouring missionaries, had planted themselves on the faith of most solemn treaties, upon a small portion of soil, which they were cultivating and improving. But shall find his covetous eyes upon Naboth's Vineyard, and soon there were found Jezebels enough to put him in possession; in spite of treaties, in defiance of justice and humanity, and the law of God. The missionaries were imprisoned, and the army of the United States were employed to force the red man from his native soil and drive him at the point of the bayonet into the wilds of the far west. There with a crushed and an agonized spirit, and hopeless of justice or mercy from man, has he been lifting up his cry to God while we have been gloating over his inheritance.

3. Our prosperity has led us to engage in a war of foreign conquest and to wrest my a feeble nation a large portion of its territory. I refer to the war with Mexico. Forty years ago who would have believed it possible that the moral sensibilities of this republic would so soon be blunted enough to lead its government, chosen by the people, to follow the fatal and awful example of ancient republics by invading the territory of a neighboring country as aggressor; and as the result shows, for the very purpose of acquiring a portion of its territory. Yet that desire for aggrandizement and increased wealth has led us to carry through the unrighteous plan, and by treaties we have attached to our already unwieldy territory more of surface than the original United States. We may boast over it, and perhaps be the means of extending into those regions a higher civilization, and possibly the Gospel too. But let us never forget that all this will be God's work, well the disgrace and dishonor and unrighteous and unnecessary yea aggressive war upon a feeble state, are ours; and so too must be the consequences if those are not disastrous in the long run it will be the first time in the world history when such iniquities have passed unpunished.

4. One more effect of our prosperity only I shall mention. We have shown and still show a determination to perpetuate and enlarge the boundaries of slavery.

I speak not of the introduction of slavery. For it was forced upon us by Great Britain while we were her colonies. And it was one of those giant evils which winding itself into the very texture of society, required a long period and wise counsels to get rid of. Yet the framers of our Constitution determined that it should be routed out at last. They would not admit the word slave or slavery into the constitution, nor any other expression implying that man has a right of property in his fellow man. But they did inconsistently with such views allow the slave trade to exist till 1808 or 20 years.

And then I am compelled to record a fact that shows New England to have a deeper stain upon her garments in the matter of slavery than is generally supposed. In the convention of 1787 that formed the Constitution, a committee reported that the slave trade might be allowed till the year 1800: whereupon General Pinckney of S. Carolina moved that the time be extended to 1808 and Mr. Gerry of Massachusetts seconded the motion; and in the vote upon this amendment, we find that N. Hampshire Massachusetts and Connecticut Maryland N. Carolina S. Carolina and Georgia were in the affirmative, and N. Jersey Pennsylvania Delaware and Virginia in the negative. Had the New England delegation been upon the negative the amendment would have failed and the slave trade would have terminated in 1800. And why were they not in the negative. Alas for human nature the reason is but too obvious. This traffic was carried on by New England ships and the profits went to enrich New England merchants. It is calculated by a late writer that those eight years of the trade introduced not less than 400,000 slaves, which having trebled since 1810, we may reckon 300,000 of our present slave population as the result of N. England votes. If anything like this is true, surely it becomes this part of the country to humble itself



in sackcloth before God, and when the disposed to be severe towards the South for not knocking off the chains of the slave, to remember how are to share she has taken in prolonging and multiplying the dreadful evil upon the country.

But think not that I am exonerating the South from blame in this matter. For although in the convention that adopted the Constitution the strongest antislavery speeches were made by eminent Southern man such as Madison, Mason, Martin, and Randolph, and though the general understanding was that slavery should be restricted to the states in which it had been introduced by Great Britain, yet it has long been the steady purpose of the south to push it as far as possible into new states and territories in spite of express enactments and compromises. They demanded that Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri and Texas territories of vast extent and fertility should come into the Union with this blight upon them. As an offset, however, they proposed and entered into a solemn compact, in 1820, that in all the territory ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana which lies north of 36° 30', slavery in and involuntary servitude, otherwise than as the punishment of crimes, *shall be and is hereby forever prohibited*. For thirty-four years we had supposed the friends of slavery determined to adhere to this ordinance as long as the Union should last. But the grasping desire for more power and more territory, which success and prosperity always invites, has manifested itself during the present season by her most unceremonious attempts to sweep away all compacts and compromises and every barrier which the eminent statesmen of the have reared against the extension of an evil that lies under the ban of the civilized world, and to let it sweep with its Sirocco breath over the vast plains of the Mississippi Valley, rush over the Rocky Mountains, and wither the fair fields along the Pacific Coast. Since this measure has found northern instruments to introduce and push it forward, although abhorrent to the almost universal feelings of a free state according to the almost universal feelings of the free states. But it is mainly sustained by the slave states and so strong is the power of party organization, that my own expectation is that it will be consummated. If so, slavery and antislavery feelings, no longer softened and kept quiet by ordinances and compromises will come into naked and terrific conflict, and well may we tremble for the consequences to the harmony and union of our country.

But I have no intention of discussing the Nebraska and Kansas Bill. I am one of 3,050 clergymen whose earnest solemn protest has been treated so scornfully in the United States Senate; and I know not what more I can do. But my thoughts to day take a different direction. I pointed out to you several particulars in which as I believe the nation having waxen fat and forsaken God has been guilty of sins which his holy justice cannot suffer and pass unpunished. For our desecration of the Sabbath, for our oppressing and persecution of the Indian; for our unrighteous wars of conquest; and for our neglect to let the captive go free, and the extension of the area of slavery, the judgment of God must come upon us. As a nation we shall not exist in another world; therefore retribution must do its work on earth. God has various ways of punishing the guilty. Instruments such as He needs are always ready. Often do we vent our indignation against them, when we ought to be humbling ourselves before Him. What if it should turn out as I fear will that the unlooked for blow against freedom and against the north is the judgment of God against us for having been instrumental in lengthening the dreadful traffic in human beings, and from not doing all in our power to defend the rights and property of the persecuted aboriginal and for engaging as many northern men have in an aggressive unnecessary war.

Such a view of the subject will lessen our disposition to denounce the authors and inventors of these new measures. If they are employed by Jehovah as executors of his justice, it does not indeed make them any less guilty in this and deserving of rebuke. But if conscious that we deserve the chastisement we shall at least have some respect for them as the scourges whom God employs and whom He will punish in their term.

Yes in their term: nor will that time in my opinion be long-delayed. Suppose this Nebraska bill should pass and become a law, what exultation will that be among slaveholders and their coadjutors. But let it not be forgotten that sometimes the heaviest judgment God brings upon men is to allow their plans to succeed. Such I think will be the case should this plan succeed. New England may feel that it is a judgment upon her because for the present it is a heavy blow to freedom. But it will be a heavy blow upon the South I predict that when the president of the United States attaches his signature to that bill, it will become the death warrant of slavery. It will throw open that system to the whole artillery of public opinion throughout the civilized world. No longer sheltered by bargains and compromises, it cannot long stand before such a battery. The South may indeed reap a temporary advantage, but it will be such a victory as will ensure the destruction of the system to which she so fondly clings, and some of her shrewdest statesmen foresee all this and have lifted their warning voices in Congress. The north is bound to do the same; as indeed she has done; and if prove in vain, let her humble herself before God for his rebuke and wait in calmness the result. It may be, indeed, that retributive justice will not be satisfied till our union is severed, and all our high hopes of future glory of our indivisible nation on this continent are scattered to the winds. Having repented of our own participation in the guilt of slavery, and done what we can to counteract the evils we have caused, we only to stand upon our watch and see the wheels of Providence roll on, ready to be employed as the humblest instrument in bringing forward what will assuredly come, a jubilee of freedom through all our borders.

#### Delivered

At Conway Thanksgiving day December 2 1824

At Amherst April 6 1826 fast day

At Greenfield S. Parish April 1828

At Amherst College Fast Day April 5 1832

At Amherst College December 1 1836

At Northampton November 29 1832 Thanksgiving

At Bloody Brook November 27 1834 Thanksgiving

At Hadley East Parish November 30 1843 Thanksgiving

At Amherst College October 1847

At Amherst College April 1854

## Sermon 535 Sun Going Down at Noon

[E. Hitchcock, *The Sun Going Down at Noon*  
(J. S. and C. Printers, Amherst, Mass., 1829)]

[Text extracted from pdf available on Google Books.]

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### DISCOURSE

Delivered at Williamsburg, November 27, 1828

At the funeral of

MRS. FIDELIA LORD

Wife of Rev. Henry Lord

By Edward Hitchcock

Professor in Amherst College

Amherst, J. S. and C. Printers

1829

### JEREMIAH 15:9

*She hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day.*

It is a remark of Solomon, to which all will most cordially assent, *truly the light is sweet; and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun*. Without this light, indeed, existence would be cheerless; most of our present labors would be impracticable, and we should lose those rich prospects nature is continually opening before us: nor could we enjoy the face of *kindred or of friend*. Hence we all are disposed to welcome the light of the sun, as one of the richest blessings of God, and to exclaim,

*Hail holy light! offspring of heaven, firstborn*

But suppose now, that in the midst of a clear day, the sun were to be suddenly extinguished; or should rush from his noon day height, and disappear behind the mountains, leaving the world in darkness. How alarming and distressing would be such a phenomenon. Yet it is to such an event that the prophet refers

in the text, when he says, *her sun is gone down while it was yet day*. It has set prematurely. While it seemed yet far above the horizon, it suddenly vanished and darkness followed.

The prophet in this passage is describing the approaching woes of Jerusalem; and to render the picture more lively, he represents her calamities as already come.

But the figure here employed is peculiarly appropriate for illustrating the power and influence of any severe calamity, whether national or individual. This is the use I wish to make of the text at this time; and in order to feel its force, we must be more particular in its examination.

Suppose it to be noon, in a bright and clear day of spring, when *the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle (dove) is heard in our land*. At such a time the animate world is full of life and activity. The birds fill the woods with their music; the insects buzz and glitter through the air; the flocks and herds are seen grazing in the green pastures; the husbandman is busy in the field; the shop of the mechanic sends forth the sound of industry; the store house of the merchant is thrown open; the traveller, as he passes along, is observing the beauty, and imbibing the fragrance of the landscape: the professional man, confined by business, looks abroad upon the face of nature and longs to go forth to gaze upon its loveliness and to breathe the freshness of spring; the man of wealth is looking over his possessions with a feeling of perfect security: some are eating and drinking; others are marrying and giving in marriage: But among all these descriptions of men, the hurry and bustle of business and pleasure, and the general constancy of nature's course, prevent probably every one from recollecting that over this bright and beautiful scene a single moment may bring a total and most appalling change.

Suppose now, that in the midst of this clear day the sun should suddenly sink in the horizon and night descend without a warning! It would strike both men and beasts with a freezing terror: The song of the birds ceases: the flocks and herds flee affrighted for shelter: the husbandman, who had perhaps just turned his eye upon the noonday sun and was ruminating upon the quantity of labor he could accomplish ere night, now finds himself in the field shrouded in darkness, and scarcely can he, with a palpitating heart and trembling limbs, trace his path to the place of his abode: the instruments of labor drop involuntarily from the hands of the mechanic, and he looks around upon the darkness with terror and despondency. The traveller forgets the beauties of creation and thinks only of his own safety. The rich man, so secure and joyous in his possessions a moment before, would now gladly yield up all, could his personal safety be secured. The board of riot is suddenly deserted: the intoxicating cup falls from the hands of the drunkard: the half uttered oath, or the licentious song, is turned into a prayer; and the loud laugh and frolic of the marriage feast, are changed into the stillness and solemnity of a funeral.

Now, my hearers, this scene, which was in the mind of the prophet when he uttered the words of the text, is a most lively representation of the power of disappointment, when it falls upon us unexpectedly and heavily. A change is produced in our prospects, as sudden and as great, as from noon day to midnight. The sun of hope, which shone around us and gave a bright colouring to the scenes of life, suddenly sinks from its sphere, in the day of disappointment, and all the lovely visions that surrounded and enticed us, vanish at once; and the darkness of despondency settles upon our souls.

The scriptures exhibit many instances of this sudden change in the outward circumstances of individuals. Among these Job stands foremost. He had health and affluence, and his children were all sharing with him in these blessings. His sun of prosperity had reached its zenith. Look at him now, in this bright sunshine; and see the messenger come to tell him that the Sabaeans had plundered his cattle and

murdered their keepers; and while he is yet speaking, see the second messenger enter, proclaiming his flocks and their shepherds to be destroyed by fire from heaven; and immediately mark the third messenger, announcing his camels and the servants that kept them, to be destroyed by the Chaldeans; and last, and most overwhelming, hear the fourth messenger declaring to the miserable man, how his ten children were buried in the ruins of their habitation. What now becomes of his prosperity Surely *his sun is gone down while it was yet day. Yet in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

The case of Abraham, when commanded to sacrifice his son, exhibits a great, though short change in his circumstances. Isaac was the child of promise, in whom God had declared all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He had already reached his twenty fifth year, and Abraham, no doubt, had doated much upon his future greatness. But he receives a dreadful command; and the bright day of his hopes is succeeded by a midnight of distress and trial of his faith. And how gloomy must have been his prospects, as he journeyed towards mount Moriah, the fatal place for sacrifice. But God soon caused his darkness to pass away and a brighter day to succeed: and so will he cause a lighter sun to rise upon all, who, in the time of severe adversity, drink the cup appointed for them with Abraham's faith.

Other scriptural instances, of a sudden night coming over bright worldly prospects, might be adduced. What a change did Lot experience? Today he rests securely in Sodom, with wife, and children, and other relatives: To-morrow, he stands a trembling fugitive in Zoar, with only two of his children by his side, and looks back and sees the smoke of Sodom going up to heaven, and a beloved wife standing on the plain a pillar of salt, an eternal monument of God's displeasure against sin. David too, often experienced the most distressing reverses of fortune; and Paul has given us a long list of eminent saints, *who had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.*

And my hearers, the nature of things is not yet changed, so but that disappointment has still a power to turn the fairest sunshine into the darkest night. Many, indeed, in regard to wealth, or fame, or friends, find that their sun goes down while it is yet day. An allusion, however, to a few of the most prominent instances that occur, is all that can be here attempted.

Witness the man, who has been unremittingly toiling for a long course of years, for the acquisition of a respectable property; and having obtained it, some one of the elements, or the fraud and dishonesty of his fellow men, sweep away all his hard earned acquisitions in an hour, and he is reduced to dependance upon the charity of the world. Small losses had formerly distressed him beyond measure: what then are his feelings, when his golden sun, which perhaps he worshipped, has gone down while it was yet day, and he is left in the night of poverty.

So the man, who has toiled for years to attain a good reputation in the world, is by some unlucky accident, or envious competitor, thrown back at once into his original obscurity; and must grope through the darkness of neglect, till he comes to the grave.

Our dearest friends also, may abandon us, and leave us to find our way alone through a selfish and inhospitable world. Then is the sweet noon tide of friendship succeeded by the dreary night of distrust and coldness.

But reverses of these kinds are less frequent, and ought to be less distressing, than the sudden removal of those fond friends by death, on whom we had leaned, and whose society and counsel had spread a pleasing lustre over all our enjoyments and lighted up even the darkest hours of life.

View that parent, as he stands watching with tearful anxiety, the dying countenance of the child of his hopes. Long had he observed the expanding excellencies of this darling, and fondly looked forward to the day when he would fill some station of respectability and usefulness in church, or state, and prove a staff to support him in the weakness and want of old age. What a conflict then, is there, in the bosom of that parent, as he sees the strong hand of death blotting out at once all his hopes, by numbering that child among the victims of his power How does he exclaim, in the bitterness of his grief: *O my son, Absalom my son, my son Absalom would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!*

Observe too the fond wife, as she views the last struggles of an expiring husband. With his arm to protect, his strength to provide, his counsel to direct, his kindness to solace, and his prayers to strengthen her, she had found the day of life glide pleasantly along; and she flattered herself that the day of separation was far distant. O how sudden is the summons to witness his expiring agonies! and how dark and disconsolate is that night of sorrow and loneliness which succeeds this noontide of her enjoyments!

On the other hand, behold the husband, as he stands by his expiring wife. The partner of his heart, the solacer of his sorrows, the friend whose life is dearer than his own, he now sees striving in vain against an overpowering disease; and Oh, when the fatal moment comes, in which her spirit takes its flight, how does he stand a monument of sorrow, and how black is the darkness which settles upon his soul. With the prophet he exclaims, *she hath given up the ghost, her sun is gone down while it was yet day.*

To illustrate the greatness of these changes in the worldly condition, how striking is the figure employed by Jeremiah. It would not apply to those every day disappointments and trials which we meet: but only to those, which are great, and sudden, and overwhelming; and under which nothing but the power of God can sustain the soul. What change in nature would astonish more, than to see the sun quenched in his meridian glory, and rayless midnight shrouding at once the face of heaven: and what greater change in a man's worldly condition can we well conceive, than Job, surrounded by riches, health and children; and Job sitting in the ashes, poor, childless, and filled from head to foot, with a plague of biles! And how striking the contrast in the condition of that person, who, to-day, enjoys the kindness and assistance of a near and bosom friend, and to-morrow, stands, dressed in sack cloth alone, bending over the grave of that friend, to catch the last fond gaze of affection, ere the earth closes over the lifeless remains!

This figure illustrates, too, the unexpectedness of disappointments and afflictions. What could be more unlooked for in nature, than to see the noon day sun suddenly sink below the horizon! And although we are told and acknowledge, that riches take to themselves wings and fly away; that fame and glory are but fleeting dreams, and that our nearest friends must die, and may die soon; yet so little are our hearts impressed with these truths, that whenever any of these are taken away, it is to us unexpected. We are warned in God's word, and in God's providence, to be always in a state of preparation for having a final separation made between us and the dearest earthly objects with which we are connected. Yet we presumptuously imagine we can omit this preparation till to-morrow; and in almost every instance, however solemnly we have been admonished of the approaching separation between us and the objects we love, when the parting moment comes, we find it unexpected, and our hearts unprepared for the trial, and our affections taking a firmer hold than ever, of the objects we are about to lose forever.

With a few remarks, suggested by the preceding subject, I shall close this discourse.

And if disappointment and afflictions be so powerful in their effects upon the heart, let us learn to moderate our attachment to earthly objects and our expectations from them. By so doing, we shall mitigate the shock of separation. No matter whether we place our affections on riches, or honors, or friends, if our attachment be inordinate, if it usurp the place due to God, we may depend upon it, when that object is taken from us, the parting shock will be severe, and powerful, and unexpected. Let us then always endeavor in forming earthly attachments to proportion our love to their comparative value. Let God have the supreme affections of our souls, and let every other attachment be subordinate to this. Then, when God calls us to resign our property, reputation, or friends, we can do it with holy composure and resignation.

In the next place, the subject teaches us that we should strive to fix it upon our hearts at all times, that our friends and other worldly comforts must soon be parted with. We all acknowledge this in words; but we are not apt to feel its force in our hearts. Yet if the parent wishes to be prepared to part with his children, let him daily, as they come around him, reflect, that he and they must soon separate. Let the husband and the wife constantly remember, that they are ere long to be parted by death; and let this be a subject of almost daily conversation. In this way will their minds become habituated to the solemn idea, and when the parting blow falls, they will feel it less, because they have long expected it.

Again, the subject shows us that we need a calm and a steady hope in Christ, to enable us to stand fast when our earthly comforts are stripped away from us. This is the anchor of the soul that will secure us from being tossed and overwhelmed by the storms and waves of affliction. This is the golden chain which will keep us always fastened to the throne of God. Without such a hope, it is no wonder if we sink under our bereavements and refuse to be comforted. He, who has nothing beyond this world he can take hold of, has surely cause for girding and sackcloth when that world begins to fail him, and his light is turning into darkness.

The subject shows us, also, the wisdom of that direction of the apostle, *is any afflicted among you? let him pray*. Does the mourner feel a murmuring spirit within him; prayer will hush every unsubdued feeling, and enable him to say, *the cup which my heavenly Father hath given me, shall I not drink it! Not my will, but thine, be done*. Does he feel his heart sinking within him? Prayer will draw down from God an almighty support, and *he shall be holden up*. Does he fear that he shall not improve his bereavement? Let him pray, and God will cause it *to work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.

Again the subject shows us what a powerful means of grace are afflictions. We are taught in the scriptures, that the slightest circumstances in our lives have an influence reaching through eternity. Much more then, do those disappointments and separations which shake the whole soul, and make night to succeed day in the afflicted heart, much more do these providences produce a powerful effect. If we do not improve such trials, if they do not make us better, Oh, they do most dreadfully harden the heart; and they will increase, in an awful degree, the agonies of the world of perdition.

Finally, my hearers, you have probably already anticipated my application of this subject to the providence that brings us together on this occasion; not to exult, with our fellow citizens, in the festivities of thanksgiving, but to weep with those who weep, and perform the last sad offices for the dead. In regard to her whom you mourn, it is literally true, that *she has given up the ghost, her sun is gone down while it was yet day*. Suddenly indeed has it vanished from its meridian height, and the darkness of the grave follows, shrouding, as I perceive, not merely the house of the Pastor, but

spreading over the habitations of his flock. O yes! her sun is gone down to rise no more in this world. She sleeps by the side of her tender infant\*, which is taken away from the evil to come, and which left its body in this world, only to tell us that its spirit had gone to the paradise of God. (\*Mrs. Lord's infant child was living at the time of her funeral; but as it died soon after, I thought it would not be improper thus to couple them together in this printed discourse.) There they will sleep together, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. The storms and rude winds that roar above them, cannot disturb their peaceful abode. The conflict of angry passions, the uproar of this disordered world, the anguish of sin, the cares, the temptations, the disappointments of this mortal state, cannot invade their secure retreat. There will they sleep, till the archangel's shout shall call them from their slumbers, and hand in hand they will mount up to meet the Lord in the air.

My afflicted Christian Brother, this must be to you an hour most distressing to nature. Could human sympathy sustain the bleeding heart at such a time, I might believe, that when you look around upon this great assembly, and see this whole people spontaneously mingling their sorrows with yours, it might remove the load of your grief. But though I trust your heart is no less sensible to sympathy than to sorrow, yet such wounds as yours are too deep for any earthly remedies to reach; and for a time at least, agonized nature will stir up, even in the Christian bosom, an unutterable conflict of feeling. Shall I then for your consolation bring in review, the amiable and Christian virtues of your departed companion? Ah, this crowded and solemn assembly, and these tears, which are unconsciously rolling down so many cheeks, exhibit those virtues more eloquently and more impressively, than any language of mine can do. But I may speak to you of the belief, which a knowledge of those virtues inspires in all our hearts, that heavenly happiness, through her Redeemer, is now, and will forever be, their reward. True, her sun has gone down while it was yet day: But -

*It set as sets the morning star, which goes  
Not down behind the darken'd west, nor hides  
Obscur'd among the tempests of the sky,  
But melts away into the light of heaven.*

But she has left you behind alone, in a world of care, of sin, and of sorrow. And do you inquire who now shall help you bear these cares and sorrows, and encourage you in your conflicts with sin? And as your eyes turn upon these orphan children, do you ask, where now they can find a mother's care, a mother's watchfulness, a mother's tenderness, and a mother's prayers? Such questions, I know, will often arise in the bereaved heart. But your departed friend, in those sweet lines, so often repeated and sung by her towards the close of her days, has furnished you with an answer to them all.

*Preserve me, Lord, in time of need;  
For succor to thy throne I flee-*

Oh, what a power has faith in God to take away the sting of sorrow! How consoling to reflect, under our sharpest trials, that they come upon us by the appointment of the God whom we love the God who loves us the God who can pour into the afflicted heart, *joy unspeakable and full of glory*. In him, my brother, may you find support and consolation. By him, may you be guided through all the residue of the wilderness, until you arrive at the heavenly Canaan, to meet in glory every christian friend who has gone before you, and to join with them in the sweet, unbroken, unending joys of immortality.



My hearers, especially ye, whose sun of life is near its meridian, and particularly ye, who have grown up by the side of the deceased as her companions or acquaintance - permit me to enquire, as I look around among you, which of you is it, who will be called next to follow her into eternity? It must be some one of you: which is it; that I may enquire of the individual, are you prepared to leave the world, and shall you leave your weeping friends conclusive evidence of having gone to eternal rest? No answer is given to my enquiries; because no one knows who will be the next victim of death. How earnestly, then, does it become me, to press the enquiry upon every individual of the class I now address, have you yet attended to the great business of life, and become reconciled to God? While you are so busy in attending to worldly concerns, have you got in readiness for leaving the world? Are you ready to have the summons come to day? Can you stand before God in judgment with any hope of being acquitted? Can you, in confidence, commit your departing soul into the hands of your Redeemer? Oh, I most affectionately beseech you, answer these questions while you stand looking at the remains of your departed friend; and listen to the voice of most solemn warning, which speaks thence in accents deep and prophetic.

My hearers, I perceive that you all feel a deep and painful interest in this occasion; and there is surely abundant cause for the deep emotion which I witness. But will these good impressions pass away with the occasion? Will not so solemn and striking a Providence be the means of the conversion and salvation of some?

*Smitten friends  
Are angels, sent on errands full of love;  
For us they languish, and for us they die.  
And shall they languish, shall they die in vain?  
Ungrateful, shall we grieve their hovering shades  
Which wait the revolution in our hearts?*

Oh, why will we cling so closely and so fondly to this perishing world, forgetful of that grave and that judgment seat, towards which time is bearing us on eagle's wings, in spite of all our opposing struggles. Poor, poor exchange to gain this world, and lose our souls. Oh, what is there in thee, false and treacherous world thou delusive phantom - thou friend of sinners - thou enemy of God - thou vast golgotha - Oh, what is there in thee, thou murderer of souls, that can recompense us for the loss of heaven! And life, what art thou, but a scene of confusion pain sorrow sin - sickness and death: and why should we cling so tenaciously to thee, when the Paradise of God blooms in our sight, and invites us to enter! O religion, man's only unfailing friend below! be thou my constant choice, my support under trials, my solace in the hour of death, and the joy and rejoicing of my soul forever and ever! Amen.

Delivered

At Williamsburg, November 27, 1828

## Sermon 536 Weep Not for Me

[E. Hitchcock, *Weep Not for Me*  
(Brewster and White, Amherst, Mass., 1858)]

Transcribed from the print edition held at  
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### WEEP NOT FOR ME A Discourse

Delivered in the Third Congregational Church,  
in Hadley, Mass.,

At the funeral of  
MRS. MARY ANN WOODBRIDGE,  
Wife of Rev. John Woodbridge, D. D.  
January 20th, 1858,

BY EDWARD HITCHCOCK,  
Professor in Amherst College,

AMHERST  
PRESS OF BREWSTER & WHITE.  
1858.

If the literary merits of the following sermon were made the grounds of decision, I could not consent to its publication. But when the relatives of the deceased ask for it, rather for private than public distribution, on the ground that they wish to use it as a testimonial of their esteem and affection for a beloved friend, I have no heart to refuse the request. E. H.

## LUKE 23:28

*Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.*

If ever there was an object that could not fail to draw forth tears from the eyes of a good man, it was our Saviour, as his enemies were leading him away, innocent and helpless, to the place of execution. Such are the natural sympathies of the human heart, that compassion is excited even for the man whose guilt we do not doubt, if we see him in the hands of the executioner, fettered for the cross, the guillotine, or the gallows. When the disciples of Christ, therefore, who were bound to him by a thousand tender ties,—saw their Master,— whose life they knew was spotless, and whose heart was benevolence unmixed,—when they saw him led away to execution, and observed the indignities he suffered, and the painful death that awaited him, Oh, how deeply must their feelings have been agonized. And some of them were females, with feelings naturally more tender, and with sensibilities more refined and quickened by habit; so that to them the scene must have been almost insupportable. Yet it was under such circumstances, and to female disciples, that the Saviour said, as in the text: *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children.* Christ had in mind the peculiarly severe woes that would shortly come upon that unhappy city; and he knew how near he was to the termination of his sufferings, and the glorious prize before him. And although his last sufferings would be intense beyond all merely mortal experience, yet with such prospects before him, they seemed light, and there was occasion to rejoice with him that his cup of sorrow was almost emptied, rather than to mourn over his cruel fate. But their sufferings and those of their children were just beginning; nor could their termination be foreseen. For them, therefore, there was occasion to weep, as Christ did in fact, which from the heights around the city he contemplated their condition amid the falling tears.

Such language as the Saviour uses in the text, has often been in the mouth of the dying Christian. And when such an one leaves the world, there is always more reason to weep for survivors than for the departed, even if his last moments are filled with the bitterest agony. This thought I would illustrate as appropriate on this occasion; and I shall attempt to trace the leading points of the contrast between the dying believer and surviving friends. Some of those whom he leaves behind may be converted, and some unconverted. Let us look first at the condition and prospects of the latter class, as contrasted with those of the departing saint.

And, first; well may we rejoice with the dying Christian, because he is in a state of pardon; and well may we weep with the surviving sinner, because he is in a state of condemnation. The Bible solemnly declares that *he is condemned already, because he has not believed on the only begotten Son of God*, and that *by nature he is a child of wrath*. It is not condemnation in an earthly tribunal; not merely a sentence of temporal death; but it is a decree in the chancery of heaven, sealing the doom of the sinner forever, except he repent. Until the great change of regeneration pass upon him, it banishes him from the presence of God and all holy and happy beings, and consigns him to the companionship of all that is loathsome and hateful. He has violated the holy law of God, and its penalty rests with terrible weight upon his guilty soul, and there it must lie till faith in Christ shall lift it off. If not thus removed, it will cause weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, through all eternity. And well may the prospect awaken the sinner's anguish before the terrible realization overtakes him.

But the dying Christian has the hope, and it may be the confidence, that the condemnation which nature entails upon him, has been erased by the blood and sufferings of Christ; and he has the witness of the spirit that he is a child of God, *and if a child than an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ*. A reprieve, a pardon, a title to an unfading inheritance, has been bestowed upon him, and he is just going to take possession. How could one so near his immortal happiness desire that man to weep for him, who is himself in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity!

Another reason the surviving sinner has, in such a case, for weeping on his own account, is, that he must now lose the counsel and prayers of his departing Christian friend. Yet how few of those most deeply concerned appreciate the magnitude of such a loss! Like the mightiest physical powers that govern this world, prayer and Christian example are influences that are mostly unseen, and whose magnitude is known only by results; and those results are usually imputed to other causes. But prayer moves the hand that moves the world; and Christian advice and example often restrain others from courses that would be their ruin. To remove a pious friend, therefore, is sometimes the signal that God has given up a man to his chosen way.

A remarkable example of the power possessed by a good man to avert the judgments of God from those with whom he is connected, is given us in the history of Moses. It would seem from the language as if the prayer of Moses almost changed the Divine determination to destroy the Israelites; for he says to Moses, *now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them*. But Moses only pleaded the more earnestly in their behalf, and the result was, that *the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do into his people*; or, as the Psalmist describes it, *Therefore he said he would destroy them, had not Moses, his chosen, stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath lest he should destroy them*. How many evils have been averted from irreligious men by the prayers of saints in every age, will be known only when the great book of Divine Providence shall be opened on the other side of the grave. But did impenitent men know what a shield is taken from before them by the removal of a devoted Christian friend, they would surely weep chiefly for themselves, as orphans indeed.

And what a cutting reflection it ought to be, to one who stands by the dying bed, or the lifeless remains, of a faithful and pious friend, to recollect he has resisted all the counsels and prayers and tears of that friend, and remains impenitent and unsubdued. Perhaps his conversion was the object that had lain nearest the heart of that departed friend, and much had he longed and wrestled for the transition before his own departure, that with Simeon he might say, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*.

But God in inscrutable wisdom did not gratify this strong desire, and the Christian now lies dying, and must leave his friend unconverted. It is not the pains of death, nor the fear of future retribution that bring darkness over his dying hour, but the distressing apprehension that the loved one whom he leaves behind may never be converted; and how can he but exclaim, *weep not for me but for yourself*. Indeed, how feeble the prospect of conversion to one who has resisted so much and so long, now that his faithful monitor and praying friend is leaving him alone in the midst of an ensnaring and wicked world.

Finally, what great reason has the sinner to weep for himself, rather than his dying Christian friend, because the separation now about to take place between them, will probably be eternal. If indeed the removal of his friend should make him feel his danger, it might bring him to the great decision, and both of them might meet on the right hand of the final Judge. But how faint the probability of such a result, to one who has been unmoved by the Christian example and earnest prayers of an eminent saint. His removal ought rather to be regarded by the sinner as a signal of final abandonment to his chosen way; an

evidence that God's patience is exhausted, and the door of mercy closed. Oh, did the sinner realize this, it might rouse him from the slumbers of spiritual death. But alas, how thick is the film over the eyes of such! Yet it is all a vivid reality to the departing saint; and not only would he say to his surviving friend, weep not for me, but as he takes the last look of affection, he would cry out, would it avail anything, *I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

I would, secondly, describe the contrast between the dying and the living Christian, and see what occasion the former has to say to the latter, *weep not for me, but weep for yourself and yours.*

And, first, the dying saint has almost done with bodily infirmity and pain. A few hours, and the final conflict will be over. The soul will be dislodged from its frail earthly tenement, no more to be fastened to an abode of disease and decay: but permitted to enter a spiritual body as an eternal home, where suffering and death can never come:

*On the cold cheek of death smiles and roses are blending,  
And beauty immortal awakes from the tomb.*

[Source: Poem by James Beattie, 1809]

But not so with the surviving Christian. Before him there may still be many years of suffering; a long and painful struggle between life and death, ere the last sickness comes; and that may come with terrific violence, and the poor nerves be tortured to madness before they resign the body to disorganization.

But this is not all: for the dying believer is nearly at the end of all mental suffering. All pain is, indeed, in the mind: but it may exist independent of matter, and from such a source the chief part of human suffering comes. Bitter may have been the experience of the dying believer; but it is nearly and perhaps wholly over now. Often may his heart have felt the anguish of bereavement, or the stab of ingratitude, or the wrench of disappointment, or the corrosion of blasted hopes. The cares and responsibilities of life may have rested as a heavy load upon his soul; envy and jealousy may have strewn his path with thorns: difficult and trying duties may have hedged up his way. Many and bitter have assuredly been his conflicts with sin and Satan, and sometimes a dark cloud may have settled upon his religious prospects. Indeed, he has found that he must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of Heaven. But the long conflict is now over, and the shout of victory issues from his lips. His prison doors are opening, and he is pluming his wings for his upward flight. The hated body of sin he is shaking off, and his freed spirit is exulting in the liberty of the sons of God. All his earthly anxieties and cares have been cast on God, and his soul is absorbed in the opening glories of heaven. He has long been a member of the Church militant below, and stood in the front rank to fight her battles, and mourned over her worldliness and her many discomfitures. But now he goes to join the Church triumphant, where the crown is exchanged for the cross, and security and triumph take the place of agonizing conflict. Oh, why should we weep for one, who is just making so glorious a transition? But we survive, and must sustain still longer, we know not how long, the whole load of human cares and sorrows, and struggles with sin and Satan. Many a year of hard conflict with sin within and without; —with fears and doubts and anxieties, may be yet before us. And this conflict too, must be sustained with one Christian brother less to stand by our side, to aid us by his example and his prayers. Thus enfeebled we may find ourselves unequal to the struggle. And we may be compelled to witness the cause of religion maintaining a desperate struggle for existence, and error and sin triumphing over truth and purity; and reproach and buffeting for Christ's sake come upon us, more bitter than we have ever felt. A long and a thorny path may be before us yet, while our Christian brother has almost reached the end of his, and is just entering the portals of everlasting rest and glory. It

may be that we, assaulted by the world and the adversary, may yet shrink from the cross, and bring reproach upon religion by our apostacy; for even Paul, near the close of life, feared that he might be a castaway. But our dying brother has passed the region of danger, and approached nearer the burning throne than apostacy has ever come. Well then may he say to survivors, *weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children*. You are still tossed, and long may be driven, on the dark agitated billows of life; but I have passed the region of night and of storms:

*For lo! the morning dawns  
And shows the haven nigh,  
Upon whose shore in glory stands  
Mount Zion upon high.  
See too, on mountain waves  
Death's Conqueror treads secure;  
My Saviour to my rescue comes,  
And I can trust his power.*

But over you many a dark storm of sorrow may yet burst; at your heads sin will hurl many a poisoned art, and cast you down wounded. But I feel the body of death to be dropping off, and this is my last conflict with the hated foe. The clogs and fetters of sense you must perhaps for years drag about, and they will keep you grovelling in the dust, and in pursuit of vain shadows. But reality, glorious reality, now bursts upon my raptured soul, and my heart leaps out from its bondage to flesh, and joins the songs of angels. Sighing and tears may long be your portion; but the soft hand of my Redeemer is wiping away my tears forever. While you walk by faith, I begin to walk by sight. While you catch only now and then a glimpse of heavenly joy, my feet are entering that world where is fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore.

*'Tis past; I've reached the land;  
Oh death! I triumph now;  
I tread the city of my God.  
A crown adorns my brow.  
The shout of welcome sounds  
From all the blood-bought throng;  
I catch their spirit, and begin  
The everlasting song.*

And now, waiving all those more general inferences that might be drawn from this subject, I would apply it only as a profitable meditation for these funeral solemnities. For who is there in this great assembly, that does not feel how very appropriately might our departed friend have exclaimed with her last breath, *weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children*. We are celebrating the obsequies of no distinguished warrior, or statesman, or scholar, nor of one who could boast of the world's honors or titles; and yet this crowded temple, this solemn stillness, and these many eyes that are dimmed with tears, testify that one is gone whom God has honored, and whose long life of beneficence has won a place in the hearts of those by whom she was best known. It is now almost sixty-eight and a half years since God called her into existence, and began a course of discipline with her, which brought her early into harmony with himself by conversion, and into his active service as a professor of religion. The daughter of parents somewhat wealthy, in the city of Hartford, it seemed as if she could not escape the

deleterious influences and temptations of fashionable life. But God, by bringing severe affliction upon the parents, saved her from the snare. Those trials did not crush her, but developed traits of character, which, with the aid of divine grace, have contributed much to her usefulness as the wife of a minister; which relation she sustained 44 years. When pecuniary reverses came upon her father, with the loss of reason and life, she was roused to special efforts, and by becoming a teacher, not only sustained herself, but greatly aided her widowed mother. The discipline was severe, but admirably adapted to fit her to be the mother of a large family, and the companion of a faithful preacher of the Gospel. God, who fitted her for these objects, spared her to see them both most successfully accomplished. She did not die till her large family of children had all professed a personal interest in, and a hope of acceptance from that Saviour whom she loved. What a testimony this to maternal fidelity and influence! And what those children's feelings are towards their mother, may be learned from the fact, that some of them have crossed almost half of this wide continent to be present to day and do honor to her memory. Nor did she die till her beloved husband had withdrawn from the more active duties of ministerial life, admonished by advancing years and infirmities that the time for entering upon a higher sphere of labour could not be remote.

How obvious, then, that the great work of Mrs. Woodbridge's life was finished; and how great a work it was? We are apt to think too much of splendid individual acts, and to underestimate the magnitude and value of a long and quiet course of usefulness, without brilliant episodes. And I apprehend that many a mother herself, who has brought up a large family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and also greatly aided her husband in works of benevolence, it may be as a minister of the Gospel, really supposes that her life has been one of little value, because she has performed no brilliant actions. But how different a view of such a life is taken in heaven, where the good we have done, not the amount of noise we have made, or the applause we have received, will be the measure of our usefulness and deserts. Judged of by such a rule, how high a place on the scale of benevolence and usefulness must we assign to our departed friend. If I were to say that few will stand higher, and then should appeal to these her children for their opinion, what an unanimous Amen should I hear! Or should I appeal to this whole church and community, not one dissenting voice, I fancy, would be heard—and should. I submit the question to you, my venerable Christian brother, who for nearly half a century have known her best, — you, to whom she has ever been the light of your house, you, from whom she has taken so much of secular cares and responsibilities, while you were intent upon the spiritual welfare of this people, — you, with whom she has cordially sympathized in every work of benevolence, — you, who now feel, I know, that her removal has sundered the strongest tie that bound you to the earth, — Oh, I know what would be your testimony, could your agonized feelings permit you to utter the sentiments of your heart. And were we allowed to pry between the folded leaves of those books on high, which on the great day of accounts will be opened, to display all our characters, I doubt not we should find that the record of heaven estimates unostentatious goodness and persevering Christ-like labours quite as high as the testimony of earth.

But valuable as have been her labors, her prayers, and example, she has gone. Yet even in the circumstances of her departure, we see indications of the same merciful Providence, that had marked out all her course. Her last sickness, though nature struggled hard in the conflict, was the quiet termination of a long and quiet life. Always self-distrustful, it was merciful in God not to allow death to come in his most terrific form. Nor should we expect, in one whose whole life was a steady effort to do her duty in every relation, and who had so low an opinion of her own piety, any remarkable visions, or rapturous anticipations; but rather a noiseless trust in her Saviour, and a gentle resignation to the Divine Will. Any other termination of such a life, would have been inappropriate. Her's was a completed life; and as it had



always been marked by unostentatious piety, so its close should be, and was, a gradual sinking away of the soul into the glories of eternity:

*As sets the morning star, which goes  
Not down behind the darkened West,  
Nor hides obscured among the tempests of the sky;  
But melts away into the light of heaven.*

*[Source: Poem by Robert Pollok, 1827]*

But though her's was a completed life, and though she died at the best time, and in the best manner, it is just such a decease as will stir up the deepest emotions of survivors; because our sorrow rises with the magnitude of our loss. It is not in human nature to pass through such a bereavement as these afflicted relatives have experienced, and not have the deepest fountains of feeling broken up; even though they know that if her voice could now be heard, it would say, *weep not for me*. But here cords of affection that have been lengthening their coils for almost half a century, have been burst asunder. If, indeed, human sympathy could staunch such wounds, when these our friends look around upon this assembly, and see this whole people, weeping with them, they would be comforted. But how inadequate is all human consolation in such an hour. Yet they know where to resort for support. They will not, I trust, allow their thoughts to linger around the lifeless dust of the departed loved one: but rather to follow her disenthralled spirit into the presence of God and the Redeemer, and hear her calling upon her friends, and all this people, to praise the infinite grace, that allowed her to occupy so interesting a field of labour on earth, and continued her in it so long: and when her work was done, called her home to her Father's house and her Saviour's bosom. There, my venerable brother in Christ, she waits and beckons for you; nor will you long delay. There, she will stretch out her hand to one child after another, till the last one is gathered in. And there, will she welcome one and another of this people, as death summons them away. Oh, who will turn a deaf ear to such an invitation! who does not long to be one of that happy group, who will gather at length on the heavenly Mount Zion to rejoice in one another's love and in their Saviour's smiles forever!

Delivered

At Hadley, January 20, 1858

## Sermon 537 Religious Bearings of Man's Creations

[E. Hitchcock, *Religious Bearings of Man's Creation*  
(Van Benthuyesen, Albany, NY, 1856)]

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### THE RELIGIOUS BEARINGS OF MAN'S CREATION

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALBANY,

ON

SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1856.

BY EDWARD HITCHCOCK, D. D., LL.D.,

Late President of Amherst College, and now Professor of Natural Theology  
and Geology in the same institution.

ALBANY:

VAN BENTHUYSEN, PRINTER, 407 BROADWAY.

1856.

The following Discourse was preached during the meeting in Albany of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; and a subject bearing upon the relations of Science to Religion was chosen at the suggestion of the Local Committee, and by their request the Discourse is published.

## DISCOURSE

## GENESIS 2:7

*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

Sceptical minds are fond of selecting and giving prominence to those facts, historical or scientific, that have an unfavorable bearing upon religion. This is natural; and why should not the friends of religion sometimes illustrate subjects derived from the same fields, which strengthen our faith, and clarify our views of the great principles of natural and revealed truth? Guided by this principle, I propose this morning to discuss

## THE RELIGIOUS BEARINGS OF MAN'S CREATION.

Of this event we have two records; the one revealed, the other scientific. Let us look at the details of both, and then we shall be able to see the religious relations of the subject.

The scriptural account of Man's creation is full, explicit, and peculiar; more so than any other event of the six days' work. I shall call your attention to a few only of the prominent facts therein developed; particularly such as have a parallel in the scientific history of our world.

1. Revelation teaches us that man was the last of the animals created.

None of them were produced till the fifth day, when the waters were commanded *to bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living thing that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind.* At the beginning of the sixth day, *God also said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth after his kind.* Next follows, as the closing act of the demiurgic week, the introduction of man.

If we turn now to the scientific history of our race, we shall find essentially the same account of its origin as revelation presents. If science cannot say positively that man was the very last of the animals created, she can, and does say, that he was among the most recent. The arguments to prove this point are exceedingly simple and satisfactory. The chief one is this:

We find rocks in various places on the earth to have accumulated in the course of past ages, to the depth of eight or ten miles, and in them we find buried the remains of the animals and plants that lived at the different periods when the successive strata were formed. Many new species were introduced from time to time, but nowhere on the globe do we discover human remains till we rise to the newest

formations; not in fact till we reach the loose covering of soil, clay, and gravel spread over the surface, and called alluvium, whose lower part has been more usually denominated drift, or diluvium. This deposit is never more than a few hundred feet thick, usually not over one or two hundred, and I know of no example in which it is pretended that human bones occur as deep below the surface as one hundred feet. Yet the whole depth of rock from which animal remains have been dug out, is between 50,000 and 60,000 feet, and at least 30,000 species of animals differing from any now alive, have been disinterred in the rocks. Yet man is not among them. But no reason can be given why he is not, had he lived in any of the periods before the alluvial; for his bones, being composed of the same materials as those of other animals, would be no more subject to decay than theirs; as is proved in fact, by their appearance upon ancient battle fields, where they lie mingled with those of horses and elephants.

The precise period when man first appeared on earth has been a question of deep interest among scientific men, and their eyes have been wide open to every fact bearing upon the subject. In earlier times, when comparative anatomy was in its infancy, the bones of other animals were mistaken for those of man, and in one case a fossil man was announced quite deep in the rocks, which turned out, beneath the scrutinizing glance of Cuvier, to be a gigantic salamander; and the bones of mammoths were in Switzerland regarded as those of giants, and in England as those of the fallen angels. But since comparative anatomy has applied to fossil bones, principles and modes of investigation little less certain than those of mathematics, every able geologist has abandoned the expectation of finding human remains below the superficial deposits, the lowest of which are, in a geological sense, very recent. In the words of Sir Charles Lyell, *If there be a difference of opinion respecting the occurrence in certain deposits of the remains of man and his works, it is always in reference to strata confessedly of the most modern order; and it is never pretended that our race co-existed with assemblages of animals and plants of which all, or even a large proportion of the species are extinct.*

It is well known that geologists have divided those loose deposits that cover the surface, and are more or less confusedly mingled together, into two formations, the lowest called Drift or Diluvium, and the highest called Alluvium. That human remains exist in the latter no one doubts, though it may be a question whether they fall into the class properly called fossils. But the main question is, do any of these remains occur as low as the drift? On this question we shall find some diversity of opinion. But here let me make one or two preliminary remarks. The first is that Geologists are not at all agreed where drift ends, and alluvium begins; so that what one calls drift, another calls alluvium. Nor do I believe it possible to fix a line of demarkation between them, just because no such line exists in nature. With Professor Pictet, Sir Charles Lyell, and others, I believe that we ought to consider drift and alluvium as forming a single series, and that life has not been interrupted, or entirely renewed, but only some species destroyed during its deposition.

Another remark is, that in my own opinion, the causes producing drift, are still in operation, as well as those producing alluvium; and that, in fact, the two classes of causes have had a parallel operation from the first; and therefore, the two formations should be regarded as contemporaneous, rather than successive. From the earliest times, glaciers, icebergs, waves of translation, and landslips, have been forming drift, and are still forming it. And so the oceans, lakes, and rivers have ever been at work to deposit alluvium. I admit that these causes have not always acted with equal intensity, and that the greater part of drift is anterior to the great body of alluvium. But admitting any degree of parallelism in the operation of these causes, the discovery of human remains in drift, does not necessarily show them to be of great antiquity. Their age can be settled only by settling that of the deposit in which they occur.

Moreover, from this unsettled state of opinion as to these formations, it does not follow, because one observer announces human remains in drift, that others would admit them to belong to that deposit. When such announcements, therefore, are made, we should draw no inference as to the antiquity of the remains till the discoverer has told us what he means by drift.

I ought, perhaps, to add, that there is a like want of agreement among able writers in the meaning which they attach to the term fossil. Originally it included every thing mineral as well as organic, dug from the earth. Says one distinguished writer, *Geologists now use the word only to express the remains of animals and plants found buried in the earth.* (Lyell.) Says another, *An organized fossil body is one which has been buried in the earth at an undetermined epoch, and has been preserved, or left there unequivocal traces of its existence.* (M. Deshayes.) A third defines a fossil as *Every organized body, or vestige of it, found naturally buried in the earth's strata, in a state different from the normal and actual conditions of existence.* (M. D'Orbigny.) A fourth applies the word fossil to *every organic body found naturally buried in the earth, which has been preserved, or has left traces not doubtful of its existence; provided that the deposit in which it occurs has been formed under the influence of circumstances different from those now passing before our eyes.* (M. Pictet.)<sup>1</sup>

Now some writers have taken it for granted, that if they can only make out that man is found in a *fossil* state, he must have lived before Adam. But until the meaning of this term can be made more definite than it now is, a fossil man is not necessarily preadamic. He may not even be antediluvian.

Let us now look briefly at the most remarkable examples of organic remains that have been thought to prove the great antiquity of the human race, if not geologically, yet chronologically considered.

In the British Museum, and the Royal Cabinet in Paris, are specimens of human skeletons from Guadaloupe, in solid rock, hard as marble. To a person unfamiliar with rocks, these seem very striking examples of fossil men. But in fact this rock is daily forming in all the West Indian Archipelago, by the cementation of fragments of corals and shells worn off and collected by the waves; and it is not probable that these individual specimens are more than a few hundred years old - the skeletons perhaps of Caribs or Galibis, who fought a battle on the spot where they were found, about the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The most numerous examples of human bones supposed to be fossil, occur in limestone caverns, buried in mud, or stalagmite, with the bones of other animals, recent and extinct. Such cases are described in Greece, in several places in the south of France, in Belgium, in England, and in Brazil. The bones are usually separated from one another, and mixed up with those of extinct species of rhinoceroses, hyenas, bears, and other terrestrial quadrupeds, as well as with those of living species. Still more recently human remains have been found in the Serabian Alps, in connection with those of the mastodon, though I cannot say whether these occur in caverns.

Now in regard to all such cases, several considerations should lead us to be very cautious in inferring that man, and the extinct animals found in such circumstances, were cotemporaries. For, in the first place, these caverns were, for the most part, formed by subterranean streams, which carried the bones into them from without, and, therefore, those of widely different periods might have been mixed together. Again, earthquakes often produce great changes in these streams, and mix up confusedly alluvium and drift. Once more, such caverns have in various periods been tenanted by man; and there has he buried his dead, while succeeding generations have dug up their bones, and mixed them with

those of the extinct animals. We need not wonder, therefore, that the most cautious geologists have hesitated to admit that in any of the cases yet described, the evidence compels us to believe that the human remains were deposited at the same time with those of extinct hyenas, bears, and mastodons. In the language of Sir Charles Lyell, *It is not on the evidence of such intermixtures that we ought readily to admit, either the high antiquity of the human race, or the recent data of certain lost species of quadrupeds.*

In our own country several examples of fossil men have been announced, of late, with much confidence. At Natchez, it is said, that a human pelvis was found in clay, beneath *a diluvial deposit*. In Florida, a jaw and foot in a conglomerate coral reef, limestone, said to be at least ten thousand years old; another beneath four ancient cypress swamps, near New Orleans, sixteen feet below the surface, whose period of sepulture has been put at 57,600 years ago.

Every practical geologist knows well how extremely uncertain are all such calculations of the time requisite to form an alluvial deposit of a given thickness; first, because we have so very few data for comparison, and secondly, because the work is so very different in some places from what it is in others. Moreover, the many causes by which the remains of recent animals might become mixed with the extinct ones, render it necessary to scrutinize all such cases as the above, with extreme care, before we can confidently assign a very high antiquity to these supposed fossils; and accordingly, most of the ablest geologists, who have carefully examined the facts in these examples, are not convinced of their reliableness.

But suppose we admit all that is claimed in the cases that have been stated, viz., that human remains do occur in such situations as to prove that man was a cotemporary of some of the extinct races of animals - will this prove a higher antiquity to man than the Bible allows?

Not necessarily, I reply; for we have undoubted proof that since the Biblical epoch of man's creation, several large animals have disappeared from the globe. In New-Zealand, for instance, no less than eleven species of gigantic birds, and several other species in Madagascar, Rodriguer, and Bourbon, have become extinct, probably within a few hundred years. For we find their half burnt bones mixed with those of man on spots which were once the scenes of cannibal feasts. How false the inference, which should hence make these human bones of very great antiquity, because found among extinct animals! Again, the great mastodon of this country often occurs buried in our peat swamps, as at Newburgh, only a few feet below the surface; and apparently, therefore, this animal did not perish till a very late epoch in the alluvial period; nor is it possible to show that it may not have been alive since the fifth day's work of creation. Should we then even find a human skeleton in the same deposit as that of the mastodon, we might still reasonably doubt whether it had a preadamic existence.

I trust that these details will not be regarded as inappropriate on the Sabbath, when it is recollected how important to my object it is to show from science the recent origin of man, and what strenuous exertions are made at the present day to establish his preadamic existence. I only regret that I cannot go more into details, but I feel as if the following positions were incontrovertibly established.

First, that the occurrence of human remains in drift, does not certainly show man's preadamic existence.

Secondly, neither is it shown by finding his bones mixed with those of some extinct animals.

But thirdly, there is too much doubt still attached to all cases of the supposed antediluvian origin of human remains found in the earth, to allow any one to conclude certainly that they occur either in ancient drift, or among extinct preadamite races, except by accident.

Yet, fourthly, admitting their occurrence in such circumstances, it is still emphatically true, that according to science, man is among the most recent of the animals created, since his remains have never been found as low as 100 feet, while in the more than 50,000 feet of rock below, abounding with other animals, they are not found.<sup>2\*</sup>

2. Man, according to the inspired account, was placed at the head of all creatures on earth.

*And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

Who is not struck with the exalted character and office assigned to man in this passage by his Creator? And the features of his character that give him this pre-eminence are distinctly stated. It is not his physical organization; for though fearfully made in this respect, he is scarcely superior to some of the monkey tribe denominated quadrumanous, or even to the mammiferous animals. But his exaltation rests on his intellectual and moral powers. That rich sentence, *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him*, is full of meaning and interest. The image of God! What is that? Who would dare to apply such language to man, if God had not done it? A Being of infinite moral and intellectual attributes, immaterial and immortal, condescends to state without qualification, that he has stamped his own image upon a creature of his hand, and therefore gives him dominion over all other creatures in the same world. If some of them show a spark of intelligence, not one discovers a single moral characteristic; and as to intellect, if any of them possess it at all, it is immeasurably inferior to man's. If the idiot and the long degraded savage show a mental hebetude and grossness, even inferior to many of the brutes, the proper inference is, not that the race are allied to the quadrumana, but that in such cases the development of mind is prevented by natural or artificial obstructions. On the other hand, the loftiest exhibition of mental and moral power which any of our race have exhibited, may be taken as the measure of the intellectual ability of the whole race; because there is every reason to presume that when man is freed from the fetters and clogs that now obstruct the full development of his powers, the mind, now apparently, the weakest, will manifest latent powers equal to the strongest. God's own image is enstamped on every soul, and though sin and sorrow may for a while mar it, or cover it with rubbish, yet when it is polished anew by a divine hand, it will shine forth in its original freshness and beauty. In a higher sphere, where the deteriorating influences of sin are not felt, it will be seen how worthy man is to wear the crown of this lower world.

If we place side by side sketches of the heads of the different races of men, beginning with the Caucasian, and passing through the Mongolian, the Malay, and the American, to the Negro, we find marked and characteristic differences; and if we extend the comparison to the cranium of the orangoutang, we seem to have proceeded only a little farther on a descending scale; so that if we judge of the animal by its head, we shall be ready perhaps to conclude that the lowest type in the human series is only slightly elevated above the highest on the quadrumanous scale. But this is a false

inference, if we look no farther than the physical organization. The most prognathous, thick-lipped Hottentot stands far above the semi-quadrupedal orang. Says one of our ablest American comparative anatomists<sup>3</sup>, *The organization of anthropoid quadrumana justifies the naturalist in placing them at the head of the brute creation, and placing them in a position in which they, of all the animal series, shall be nearest to man. Any anatomist, however, who will take the trouble to compare the skeletons of the negro and orang, cannot fail to be struck at sight with the wide gap which separates them. The difference between the cranium, the pelvis, and the conformation of the upper extremities, in the Negro and Caucasian, sinks into insignificance, when compared with the vast difference which exists between the conformation of the same parts in the Negro and orang.*

But mere physical differences are of small consequence compared with such as are intellectual and moral. I shall not indeed take the ground that the inferior animals exhibit no traces of what we call mind in man; such as memory, imagination, volition, and reason. Admit, if you please, what in fact seems to be almost beyond question, that we do see evidence in brutes of the possession of mental faculties similar to those in man - yet who has so low an opinion of his own mental powers as not to see an immense disparity between the psychological characteristics of brutes and of men: The difference does not lie merely, or chiefly in the original strength or weakness of these faculties. For if measured by such a test, we might well hesitate to ascribe a marked superiority to man; since in his infancy he is of all animals one of the most helpless, and with less of instinctive power than they, and with a tardy development of intellect, he really often appears to disadvantage by their side. But let time pass on, and while the brute makes scarcely no progress, you will see a surprising expansion and invigoration of the powers of the infant, as it rises to the stage of youth and manhood. Excepting in the case of idiocy, or disease, you cannot stop, though you may retard, the expanding process; and by cultivation you may wonder fully accelerate and perfect it. But all such labor will be nearly wasted upon the brute. His instincts are capable of some improvement, but when you try your hand upon his mental powers, you will see at once that you have got no foundation on which to build. A few animals may, indeed, with great care, be taught to do some things mechanically; but their instruction consists chiefly in severe bodily inflictions, and fear and memory seem to be almost the only powers that are quickened; so that the feats which they perform manifest nothing almost of mental acumen. As to the power of abstraction, indeed, there is no evidence that the brutes are capable of it in any degree.

In order to see the immense intellectual disparity between man and the brutes, compare the attainments of the most remarkable specimens of the latter with those of the loftiest human genius in the full maturity of his powers. Suppose you call on the Chimpanze, the Gorilla, or the *half-reasoning elephant*, to make the comparison - they are incapable even of understanding what you mean, and in that fact you see their vast inferiority. The entire field of what we call knowledge lies absolutely beyond their reach. You may subject them to the best discipline of which they are capable during their whole lives, and yet you cannot get them possessed of a single idea, either literary or scientific.

It may be said that the idiot, and even the Hottentot, or the Negro of Central Africa, seem almost equally incapable of such ideas, and of drawing a comparison between themselves and the cultivated savor of civilized lands, and yet all these are men.

Of the idiot, I shall speak shortly. But in respect to the Hottentot and the Negro, it is not true that they cannot comprehend scientific truths. You have only to subject them to the culture that has been bestowed upon civilized man, especially if continued through successive generations; and not only shall



they be able to understand science, but it may be to rise almost to the level of the Newtons, the La Places, the Leibnitzes, and the Cuviers of proud Europe. Africaner, while prowling with the lion and the hyena for his human prey, may be only a little the most sagacious brute. For as Cicero says, *What is the difference, whether a man take the form of a brute, or having the figure of a man, show the savageness of a brute?*

But when Africaner has been subdued by the Gospel, and learns to aspire after knowledge, he shows that early discipline was alone wanting to make him as well known for mental and moral excellence, as he was for savage ferocity. But his former fellow tigers and hyenas could neither be thus tamed nor educated. He shows himself possessed of an intellectual principle within that exalts him far, far above them.

I admit that as a matter of fact a large proportion of the human family exhibit but a feeble intellectual development, and in popular language, are justly represented as but little above the brutes. But even though the majority are thus degraded, are they to be taken as a measure of the mental power of the race, or shall we rather look upon the princes of the intellectual world as fair samples of what the whole race might become, if all obstructions were taken out of the way? I have already intimated that I am an advocate of the latter view. For we do know that the most powerful intellect is reduced to the weakness of infancy by the force of bodily disease; and that minds seemingly weak in early life, have become strong when health was invigorated and peculiar circumstances roused them to action. It is also true that a blow upon the head, producing some change in the brain, has been followed some times by an almost total loss of some of the mental faculties, and sometimes by their marked invigoration. We have cases, also, in which recovery from swoons that were supposed to be death, has been succeeded by the total loss for a time of all knowledge previously gained, until, all of a sudden, and preceded by some alteration in the brain, the mind has recovered in a moment all that it had lost.

From such facts, the inference is certainly plausible, that the intellectual diversities among men may be owing to physical causes rather than difference of original calibre. If changes of physical structure or condition do, in some cases, materially clarify and invigorate the mental powers, the presumption is certainly fair, that if all minds were brought into the same circumstances in this respect, they would exhibit equal power; and even idiocy, it may be, would be transformed into genius of the highest grade. If so, then may we take the most extraordinary developments ever made by renowned scholars as a measure of the intellectual dynamics of the race. And how immeasurably higher on the scale would such a standard place man, than the most elevated point reached by the brute.

But man's chief glory lies in his moral nature, that is, in his power of distinguishing right and wrong, virtue and vice; instinctively approving of the one, and disapproving of the other; feeling a satisfaction when he conforms to the one, and dissatisfaction when he yields to the other. This power assimilates him more than anything else to the Deity, whose approval of holiness and hatred of sin are infinitely strong.

Now, these moral faculties are entirely wanting in the brutes. They may be taught to perform certain actions, and refrain from others; but there is not the shadow of proof that they have any consciousness of right and wrong. Their actions are all prompted by instinct, or by the fear of punishment, or the hope of reward. There is no conscience within to approve or to condemn; nor have they any idea of a Moral Governor, who will reward virtue and punish vice. This, the grandest idea of which created beings are

capable, is man's sole prerogative of all beings in this lower world, and it constitutes his highest distinction.

It may be said, and correctly too, as I admit, though contrary to long received opinions, that there are degraded races of men, who not only have no idea of any being superior to themselves, but no moral sense to accuse or excuse their actions; so that not even murder, or any other monstrous crime will awaken the slightest self-condemnation;<sup>4</sup> and hence it is maintained that man's boasted moral nature is the result of conventional rules, and, therefore, not an original implanted power of Divine origin. But the existence of moral feelings is too nearly universal in the human bosom, and too nearly identical in character in all hearts to be referred to fluctuating human opinions. And the very few cases in which the moral sense seems to be wanting are explained plausibly by admitting that extreme degradation and unrestrained wickedness, committed from generation to generation, can so sear the moral sensibilities, that they seem utterly dead for a time. Nevertheless, let the truth be poured in upon such a soul, with an accompanying Divine influence, and moral life will be again awakened, whose chords shall vibrate to the slightest touch.

But not so with the brute. By no process can you awaken or create moral sensibilities in his nature. Indeed, the idea of exhibiting moral truth to a brute, is ridiculous. Writers of a certain school of material philosophy, do, indeed, speak of the morale as well as the physique of the lower animals. But it is a monstrous perversion of language, and would not be employed by any one who has any just ideas of the exalted nature of the moral faculties.

3. According to Scripture, the creation of man was a miraculous and unusually important event.

Observe in what different terms the creation of man is described from that of the inferior animals. When God would introduce the latter, he said on the fifth day, *Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly in the open firmament of heaven.* And God said on the sixth day, *Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind, and it was so.* Here the command appears to be directed to the earth and the waters, to put forth a power for the production of these organic races; and it might be agreed, perhaps, with some plausibility, that this power was inherent in the elements, and not communicated with the command. Thus, instead of a miracle, it might be only a development by natural laws of the germ of organic existence in elementary matter. But when we come to the creation of man, intervening agencies are set aside, and the object seems important enough to demand the direct agency of Jehovah. Nay, he uses the plural form of expression, the language of sovereigns, when from the midst of counsellors they issue their mandates. God speaks as if in council, and says, *Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness.* Then He is described as having put forth his power to execute his decree: *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him.* In the next chapter, where the inspired historian recapitulates the work of creation, he uses a form of expression no less dignified and impressive: *And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.* One cannot but notice in all these passages how differently man's creation is described from that of the inferior animals. To produce them, God merely directs agencies already in existence to do the work, and the simple fact of their creation is stated. But to create man, He comes forth as it were from his hiding place, and taking in his hand the dust of the ground, He moulds it with Divine skill, and then breathes into it a portion of his own mental and moral life, and then fits up Paradise to receive this emanation of his skill - this image of Himself. If this was not

a miracle - if it was not a stupendous miracle - revelation contains none; nor can language describe one. I am awed, when I read the lofty description of man's creation, in Genesis. There is a fullness and dignity about it, which I find connected with no other event in Scripture. It impresses me with a sense of man's original elevation and importance in the scale of being; and though he has fallen, I do not forget that his mental characteristics remain essentially unchanged, and that by the work of redemption his moral powers may be reinstamped with the Divine image.

No less distinctly does science, or rather natural religion founded upon science, teach the miraculous origin of man.

To speak of miracles as taught by natural religion is, indeed, a new feature in Theology. But it is a neology that has a scientific basis, and a most favorable bearing upon the whole system of religious truth. For what is a miracle? What else but an event inexplicable by the ordinary laws of nature; and which, therefore, demands special Divine interference to bring it about. Now, then, the question is, can the creation of man be explained by the ordinary laws of nature? Science shows unequivocally that there was a period when he did not exist on this globe; nay, she can nearly fix the epoch of his appearance.

Was he brought in by natural law? There is, indeed, a dreamy hypothesis that attempts to explain the origination of organic beings by the inherent force of law. But to explain thus the appearance of a moral and intellectual being as unique and exalted as man, has so ridiculous an aspect to common sense, that the boldest scepticism, with perhaps a few exceptions, dare not directly advocate it. It is so obvious that some new and special power must have been concerned in his creation, that unbelief is baffled and confounded; just as it would be now, if another being, as much superior to man as he is to other animals, should start into life before our eyes.

But it is said that after all, man's creation, like every other great event of the universe, must have taken place according to law; for how absurd to suppose God ever to act without law; that is, without a settled principle of action; and if an event is conformed to law, does it not take away the idea of special Divine power; in other words, is not a miracle, according to the common understanding of the term, an impossibility?

I fully admit that there is a law of miracles, as well as of common events; but this law may contravene, intensify, or weaken nature's ordinary laws, and, therefore, it requires God's wisdom and power to introduce and give it effect. It is an alteration of the established course of things; nor does the fact, that God acts according to fixed rules, make such a change any the less special and designed to meet a particular exigency.

Now, of all the events which science shows to have transpired on this globe, none bears upon it so distinctly the marks of special miraculous power, as man's introduction. The records of the earth's past history, engraven on its rocky strata, do indeed show us other events, and even economies of life, which miraculous power can alone explain. But as man is confessedly placed at the culminating point of all terrestrial economies, and forms, indeed, the crown of this lower world, his introduction is not only a miracle, but the most glorious of all miracles earth has ever witnessed. Nay, though I cannot fathom creative power in any of its manifestations, I confess that the mystery of producing dead matter out of nothing, does not seem greater than to take that matter and mould it into a living man, and then unite with it intellectual and moral powers, such as ally this creature to its Creator, and require an immortal

existence for their development. It seems to my mind to be the crowning exercise of infinite wisdom and infinite power, and therefore, the most wonderful of all miracles.

Such is the parallelism between the facts of revealed and natural religion as to the creation of man. It forms a solid and firmly compacted basis on which we may erect some inferential truths of no small importance.

My first inference from this discussion is a presumptive argument in favor of the Mosaic Chronology.

I refer to the chronology of man and cotemporary animals; for it is well known that in respect to the chronology of the matter of the globe, many regard the Scriptures as not responsible, because they do not give the date of its origin, but only say that, *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*. And in regard to the date of man's creation, compared with the advent of Christ, as well as of many intervening events, particularly the antediluvian, it has long been known that there is room for a diversity of opinion, amounting to some thousands of years, according as we follow the Hebrew, the Samaritan, or the Septuagint text; so that when I speak of a presumption from my subject in favor of the Mosaic Chronology, I mean, in favor of its general accuracy. Whichever system of Biblical chronology we follow, the creation of man and existing animals, was comparatively recent, and science teaches the same lesson; although geological periods cannot be reckoned definitely by years.

Perhaps it may be thought that a coincidence so general, between the scientific and revealed records, is of small importance. But I judge otherwise. For undesigned coincidences are among the best of collateral proofs of the truth of Scripture; and in this case the coincidence is as exact as the nature of the case will admit. Had there been discrepancy on this subject, how eagerly would it have been seized upon to throw discredit upon Biblical chronology. This is a point against which scepticism aims its deadliest shafts. It is pleasant, therefore, to find our confidence in the accuracy of Scripture history strengthened by the record which we find enstamped upon the rocks.

My second inference enters a protest against those materialistic views, widely prevalent at the present day, which sink men, or at least some varieties of men, almost to the level of the brutes.

It is not strange, perhaps, that such views should be adopted, when we look at some of the prevailing systems of anthropology. It is first assumed that the size and shape of the cranium determine the intellectual and moral character; and since some of the races, in this respect approach certain brutes, it is inferred that in character they approximate as nearly as in phrenological development. For the next step is to deny, or at least to doubt, the existence of any thinking principle in man, independent of matter, and of course the mental and moral calibre will depend upon the size, delicacy of organization, and facile action of the brain. The third step is, to take the ground that the different races of men are not mere varieties, but distinct species, with plurality of origin. The Caucasian is always placed at the head of the species, and the Negro at the foot. According to the theory, the inferior species are incapable of elevated ideas, or religious emotions. *Lofty civilization*, says a recent writer of this school, *in all cases has been achieved solely by the Caucasian group. The black African races, inhabiting the south of Egypt, have been in constant intercourse with her, as we prove from the monuments, during 4,000 years; and yet they have not made a solitary step towards civilization - neither will they, nor can they, until their physical organization becomes changed. No line can be drawn between men and animals, on the ground of reason. Did space permit, I could produce historical testimonies by the dozen, to overthrow the postulate, which claims for certain inferior types of men, any inherent recognition of Divine*

*Providence - an idea too exalted for their cerebral organizations, and which is fondly attributed to them by untravelled or unlearned Caucasians, whose kind - hearted simplicity has not realized that diverse lower races of humanity actually exist uninvested by the Almighty with mental faculties adequate to the perception of religious sentiments or abstract philosophies, that in themselves are exclusively Caucasian.*<sup>5</sup>

How diverse are such views of the human family from those presented in the Bible! *And God said let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him. He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth; and Christ commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.* At last, however, physiologists have found out, by an examination of the crania, that *diverse lower races of humanity* have never been invested by their Creator with the mental faculties adequate to the perception of religious sentiments, which belong exclusively to the Caucasian race.

These degrading views of the human family are also contrary to the lessons of experience. For two hundred years, at least, almost countless experiments have been tried by able, conscientious, and persevering men, upon every variety of our race, to see if they were capable of intellectual and moral culture. To this work, thousands upon thousands of devoted missionaries have consecrated their lives; and from every quarter of the globe - from the wigwam of the American Indian, the mud - hut of the African Negro, and the kraal of the Hottentot, as well as from the burrow of the Greenlander, and the cities of the semi-civilized Mongolian - the same testimony has been sent back. Not only are all these races capable of such culture, but vast multitudes of the young have shown nearly as much intellectual power and susceptibility to religious emotions as the Caucasian race, and have been reclaimed from their savage state, instructed in the arts of civilization, and have lived the life and died the death of the Christian. Yet all this evidence passes for nothing with the anthropologists to whom I have referred. With them a single degree more or less in the facial angle, a half inch added to, or subtracted from the circumference of the cranium, or a shade lighter or darker in the color, weighs more than the testimony of a thousand missionaries, whom they speak of as unlearned Caucasians, whose *kind-hearted simplicity* renders them incapable of judging of the intellectual and moral ability of those among whom they spend their days.

But finally, these degrading views of man are contrary to self-consciousness. I will admit, if you please, that in bodily organization I am paralleled by the quadrumana. But I am conscious of intellectual and moral powers within me, which, although now intimately linked to matter, and perhaps may be, in some other form, forever, are still distinct from matter, independent of it in nature, and raising me immeasurably above all forms of organization, and every being not possessed of like powers. If by my physical structure, my animal life and instincts, I am allied to the brutes, by my higher faculties I am assimilated to my Creator, and I glory in the thought that I was made in his image. In such a nature there can be nothing defective, or degrading, but sin. This, I acknowledge, has made dreadful havoc with my nobler powers. But the fair columns erected by an Infinite Architect still stand with their entablatures and arches, and I look with confidence to the same Divine Hand to clear away the rubbish and the defilement, and to make the whole temple more beautiful and glorious than even Eden could boast. For I look forward to an immortal existence, and to a state of sinless perfection - nay, more, to the society of holy angels and communion with the Infinite God. In the conscious possession of such powers and aspirations, which ally me to all that is exalted and noble in the universe, how instinctively do I recoil from views which make thought and conscience mere functions of the brain, to perish, of course, with organization.

My third inference derives from this subject a refutation of the most plausible arguments for atheism and pantheism, and presents a new argument for the Divine existence.

There are two points which atheists consider their strong holds; the one is the eternity of the world, and the other the eternal succession of processes and races. And so long as they could be met only by abstract metaphysical reasoning, they could not be fairly driven from these coverts. But the fact of man's creation cannot, by the utmost ingenuity, be woven into conformity with these dreamy hypotheses. Had it been made known only by revelation, atheism would have evaded its force by denying the authority. But science, teaching the same fact, cuts off this subterfuge. Or did not both these records give so very recent a date to the human species, unbelief might have hidden itself behind the veil of antiquity. But now the fact is too firmly established to be denied, that the most perfect and exalted of all terrestrial races, was introduced, probably, the latest of them all; and thus is demonstrative evidence, furnished of a direct and special intervention of wisdom and power, such as no being but God possesses. Suppose then, you admit the eternal existence of matter, and even the eternal succession of the lower animals, still you have in man's creation as imperious a necessity for a Deity, as the origination of matter, or any of its other modifications would demand. And it must be a personal Deity, not a mere blind force pervading nature, such as pantheism admits; for to create man, infinite wisdom, as well as infinite power, must be brought into exercise.

The argument from the design everywhere apparent in nature, for the Divine existence, requires an admission that the existing processes and races had a beginning. But this the atheist denies, as we have already seen, and not without some degree of plausibility. Yet in man's creation we have a work demanding an Infinite Deity, accomplished within a definite period. It is not, indeed, the original creation of matter, but rather, its recreation, with the bestowment of the higher principles of life and intellect. It may be regarded, therefore, as a new argument for the Divine existence, or rather, perhaps, the old argument cleared of every difficulty, and having the freshness and transparency of demonstration.

My fourth inference derives from the subject a refutation of the wide-spread doctrine of creation by law, and of the unmiraculous development of the higher from the lower forms of organic life.

This hypothesis, though old as Democritus, and finding a lodgment occasionally in the brain of here and there a cloistered sceptic, has never, till our day, assumed a popular dress, and ventured forth to gain the attention of the crowd, and become the theme of discussion in the place of public resort, and even by the fireside of private life. La Place first attempted to show how suns and systems might be formed from eternal matter in a nebulous state, without a Deity. Next, the French naturalists, improving upon Democritus, described the process by which inorganic matter became organic, in the lowest and simplest degree; and finally, with the aid of Anglo-Saxon sceptics, they traced the development of the vital particle, called a monad, in its upward progress, through higher and higher tribes of animals, till finally, even man was evolved from the quadrumana, by what was called, *a tendency to improvement* and *the force of circumstances*. And all these changes depended, not upon miraculous intervention, but upon the operation of laws eternally inherent in nature; so that the hypothesis may properly be denominated *creation by law*.

To sustain these views, appeal has been made to almost every department of nature, especially to those parts over which, through difficulty or defect of investigation, obscurity still hangs. But though unsustained by any department of science, it seems to me that its absurdity is eminently manifest from

the creation of man. The mere attempt to state the process by which the orangoutang is converted by natural law into the human species, can hardly fail to excite the smile of common sense. But if the views presented in this discourse are true, it will excite a sigh, rather than a smile, to find that reasonable and intelligent men have no higher idea of the intellectual and moral nature of the immortal mind, than to suppose it capable of derivation by a natural process, from the orangoutang; nay, from a vitalized but scarcely organized monad. How strange, how impious, even, to talk of the evolution of God's image from a quadrumanous brute! Make out, if you please, a near corporeal relation; but who, that is not himself brutalized, can try to bridge over the wide gulf between man's higher nature and the most sagacious brute, by that abused and ill-understood phrase, a law of nature.

My fifth inference not only removes all presumption against Christianity as a miraculous dispensation, but furnishes a strong presumption in favor of the miracles of revelation.

We have seen that the most remarkable miracle of the Bible - the creation of man - is also a miracle in the history of science, and the most striking too of all the miracles in that history. It contains others - such, for instance, as the creation of the inferior animals. But I would fix my eye at this time solely on man. From the dust of the ground I see him start into life in the full perfection of his powers, and with a nature so much superior to that of any other terrestrial creature, as to preclude the idea of any connection, save that they all belong to the same great system of organization. Philosophy is utterly baffled in attempting to explain by any known laws and processes of nature, the derivation of such a being from any pre-existing races. Strive, as she does, to avoid it, she is forced to the conclusion that special Divine wisdom and power must be called in to explain such a phenomenon. So long as revelation alone asserted the recent origin of man, scepticism could imagine his existence in an endless series. But now that the earth itself has opened its mouth to confirm the testimony of revelation on this point, miraculous power alone can solve the great problem of his existence.

And what a host of sceptical doubts and surmises, which have long been fastened as vipers to the hand of Christianity, does that one great miracle of nature paralyze, so that instead of seeing her fall down dead, as an unbelieving world have long expected she would, they now behold her shaking them off, and feeling no harm. The moment you bring the famous cavil of Hume respecting testimony, or the mystic hypothesis of Strauss, or the shadowy dreams of the anti-supernaturalists, or the fancied inspiration of the infidel spiritualists, into the presence of this one great fact of man's miraculous creation, they fall flat upon their faces, like Dagon before the ark of God. A miracle once admitted in the history of nature, and all presumptions against analogous miracles in Christianity vanish like fog before the sun. Nay more, we obtain a positive presumption in favor of all which revelation describes. The ponderous metaphysical and rationalistic tomes that have been written to disprove the miraculous character of Christianity, and their equally voluminous replies, now lose their potency, and we may suffer them to pass into the limbo of forgetfulness.

If these things are so, then may I add as another inference, that we gain from the whole subject, a presumptive proof of the truth of revelation.

If science had been discrepant to revelation in relation to the creation and character of man, as much as it is now in agreement, it surely would have been seized upon as casting suspicion upon Christianity. Why, then, should not these remarkable coincidences strengthen our conviction of its truth? When the writer of Genesis placed man's creation on the last of the demiurgic days, who told him that when the earth's rocky archives should be deciphered, man's registry would be found only near the close of the

long roll? When he represented the work as eminently miraculous, who told him that the science of the nineteenth century would teach the same? And when he placed man at the head of creation on earth, who told him that psychology and ethics would make the same classification? Who told him? How natural the conclusion that it was the same Infinite Instructor, whose hand laid the foundations of the earth, filled it with life and beauty, and who therefore could not be mistaken in its history?

In view of this whole discussion, may I not add in conclusion, that it furnishes an instructive example of the use that may be made of natural religion by the minister of the Gospel?

Imperfectly as the subject has been presented, may I not presume that my hearers feel that the teachings of science, in relation to man's creation and character, do lend a strong confirmation of the Biblical account, and that this united testimony throws much light upon several important principles in the theory of religion? I have touched, however, upon only a single point, where natural and revealed theology meet, and doubtless other points, equally prolific of important instruction, lie along the line of junction, waiting only careful investigation. And is not this sort of research what the spirit of the present age demands? Infidelity has long since claimed the testimony of science as on her side; and I fear that too often the expounders of revealed theology have half admitted the claim, and felt that the less they had to do with natural religion, the better. But this jealousy of the religious bearings of science is entirely unfounded, and if ever she has seemed to speak against revealed truth, it was ventriloquism, and not her natural language. Let the preachers of the Gospel diligently explore the fields of natural religion, and many a rich gem of truth shall reward their search, which, polished by the hand of learned piety, shall sparkle even in the fair crown of Christianity. To preach Christ crucified, should be, indeed, their chief aim and effort. But if they would be workmen that need not be ashamed, they should be able to draw the illustration and defence of the truth from the whole field of nature, as well as of revelation. And whether they seek responses at the shrine of God's word, or his works, or his providence, they will find unity, harmony, and mutual corroboration. The rays of truth coming through these different media, may, indeed, be of different colors; but they will be found sweetly blending into one unbroken bow of light, painted on the retiring cloud of error and sin, and presaging the glories of earth's latter day.

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<sup>1</sup> Traite de Paleontologie, par Professeur F. J. Pictet, Tome Premier, p. 17. See also Lehrbuch der Geognosie, von Dr. Carl Friedrich Naumann, Erster Band, p. 812. Dr. Naumann's views correspond essentially with those of Sir Charles Lyell.

<sup>2</sup> It may gratify some readers, if, in addition to the opinion of Sir Charles Lyell, in the text, I add that of a few other eminent geologists, whose writings happen to be at hand, respecting the time of man's appearance on the globe.

*It may be stated, says Professor John Phillips, as a general admission, that man did not exist on the globe during the secondary and probably not during the epoch of eocene and pleiocene formations, and that sufficient evidence for his coexistence in Northern climes with the mammoths and hippopotami is yet wanting; but as the races of oxen, horses, camels, &c., had then begun to exist, it is not, perhaps, an unreasonable expectation that, eventually, this question will be decided in the affirmative.* - Phillips' Manual of Geology, p. 438, London, 1855.



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*Does man exist in a fossil state?* inquires M. Alcide D'Orbigny. *By consulting well-established facts, we have no doubt of the truth of the affirmative, particularly in the sense which we give to the word fossil. (See text, pp. 11 and 12.) Now, since we admit man to be in a fossil condition, we may inquire to what epoch his remains belong. The last geological stages - the Subappenine and Fahlunien - which preceded the existing epoch, do they show any where traces of human remains either in marine or terrestrial deposits. We think we can reply in the negative; for no well-established fact will sustain the opinion that they do occur therein. Human remains are peculiar to caverns, or osseous breccias, or alluvions. It follows from thence that fossil human remains, whenever they have been carefully observed, are met with in all cases along with other beings of the existing epoch, and are fossil in contemporaneous deposits. Human bones are wanting entirely in the two last stages (geological) which have preceded our own. - Cours Elementaire de Paleontologie et de Geologie, &c., par M. Alcide D'Orbigny. Premier volume, p. 162. Paris, 1849.*

*Have human fossils been found? Did man appear on the globe before the present epoch?* inquires Professor Pictet. *Such is the important question to which modern science seems to give a negative answer, although at various times it has been judged otherwise. The true question appears to me to be the following: What animals peopled Europe when man first appeared, and by consequent, at what geological period can his origin be placed? All paleontologists at this day are agreed that there is no proof of his existence during the tertiary epoch, or the anterior epochs. All who admit the view which I have elsewhere exhibited, of the relations of the diluvial and modern epochs, will know also that this question may be treated without prejudice and according to facts alone. I have shown in fact that we may probably regard these two periods as forming together a single series, during which life has been neither entirely interrupted or renewed, at least in Europe; and during which partial, local, and successive inundations have deposited several formations, destroying only some species. After reviewing the facts, Professor Pictet concludes: 1. That man was not established in Europe at the commencement of the diluvial epoch. 2. That some migrations probably took place in the course of the diluvial period. 3. That the definite establishment of man in Europe and the occupation of that continent by a numerous population, probably took place after the great inundation which deposited the rolled fragments in the caverns and on the plains of the continent. - Pictet's Traite de Paleontologie, &c., Tome Premiere, p. 145, et seq. Seconde Edition. Paris, 1853.*

<sup>3</sup> Professor Jeffries Wyman

<sup>4</sup> See Moffat's Southern Africa, pp. 89, 177, 182, &c., sixth edition.

<sup>5</sup> Types of Mankind, pp. 461, 462, 463.

Delivered

At Albany New York August 24 1856



## Sermon 538 Extract from a Farewell Discourse

[E. Hitchcock, *Extract from a Farewell Discourse*  
(*Christian Spectator*, vol. 8, March 1826, pp. 120-123)]

Text extracted from pdf available from Google Books at:

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### EXTRACT FROM A FAREWELL DISCOURSE\*

*Christian Spectator*, vol. 8, March 1826, pp. 120-123.

[*This sermon was presumably the last Hitchcock preached in Conway before his departure.*]

From the point I now occupy, the terminating point of my ministry, the mind is irresistibly turned backward, to take a review of my labours among this people; and though short has been my ministry, yet how momentous the consequences! how solemn the retrospect. How does the sense of unfaithfulness press so heavily upon the soul, as almost to shut out any consolation which the other side of the picture might present! I dare not on this occasion, my hearers, adopt in full, the language of the great apostle, and *take you to record, that I am pure from the blood of all men*. But amid all my fears of past deficiency, of one thing I feel confident. I sincerely believe that the great features, the leading principles of that system of divine truth I have exhibited before you, constitute the essence of the true Gospel. You well know that the system I have defended, embraced the doctrines of the Reformation; and I feel some degree of confidence, with the apostle Paul, in *certifying you, brethren, that the gospel I have preached, was not after man, neither was I taught it of man*. Those truths I have spent my strength in inculcating, I once disbelieved and regarded as foolishness. But it was before I had ever carefully and seriously studied the Bible. I could declaim against the dogmas about the trinity, and regeneration, and depravity, election and perseverance as gross absurdities; but my knowledge of their absurdity was derived, not from the scriptures, but from the speculations of my own reason, or rather from my prejudices. In short, whatever be my

\*The dismissal took place in consequence of ill health.

present condition, while I continued to reject these doctrines, I am sure I was a stranger altogether to practical godliness; and my boasted rational views of religion - those same views that are at this day so assiduously propagated in our land - were not at all inconsistent with a supreme love of the world, and an eager and selfish pursuit after its vanities. But it pleased God at length, to bring a lowering cloud over my prospects of worldly distinction and happiness; and to place me in such a condition, that I could not avoid a serious inquiry into the true state of my soul in relation to God. And then I saw that I had built my house upon the sand. My religious system, (if that can be called a system which consists chiefly of negatives), so comfortable while in health and prosperity, afforded not one ray of consolation to cheer the darkness of adversity. But consolation I needed, and anxiously sought. The doctrines of grace appeared to my unsubdued heart as absurd and hateful as ever, except that now and then conscience

would lift her unwelcome voice in their favour. Experience, too, had shown me that an opposite system was radically deficient. Which way then could I turn? One only course seemed to be left. The Bible was the only infallible standard of truth; and God had promised wisdom to those who sought it. Having lost all confidence in mere human opinions, and endeavouring to cast off the authority of names, I resolved to go to the unadulterated word of God, and search it without note or comment, but not without prayer. Commencing with Genesis, I rested not till I found the *Amen* of Revelation. And in spite of a host of prejudices, and a heart hostile to truth that thwarted its desires, the doctrines I have preached gradually opened upon my mind with an evidence I could not resist; and I became satisfied that I was a sinner, lost and entirely depraved, and if not renewed by the Spirit of God, and forgiven through the blood of Jehovah Jesus, I must perish forever. From that period to the present, the truth of these doctrines has been more and more clearly developed with every returning year; and now, when my heart and flesh faileth, - when eternal scenes seem near, do they appear doubly precious and important. I often doubt whether I possess a saving faith in those doctrines; but that they are the true and the sole foundation of the sinner's hope, and constitute the very essence and soul of the gospel, I cannot doubt. And it is because I have thus learned their truth and immense importance, that I have so often and so fully urged them upon my fellow-men, in spite of their unpopularity, and in spite of all the obloquy and reproach I may have experienced from many, whom, so far as this world is concerned, I esteem and love. And therefore also is it, my dear people, that I feel a deep anxiety that these truths, in their unadulterated purity, should be preached to you from this desk, through every successive generation. Much as I have reason to hope this society will still, as ever, contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, yet knowing how deceitful is the human heart, and with such views and experience as I have just described, how can I but regard as the severest of evils, the establishment of one, as my successor in the sacred office, who shall deny, either in preaching or practice, those great truths I have inculcated; - or of one who, through timidity or worldly policy, shall neglect faithfully and prominently to urge them upon your belief; - or of one who shall render the preaching of them a mere nullity, by admitting to his undistinguishing fellowship, and receiving alike, as Christian brethren, those who believe and those who reject them.

The place I now occupy, my hearers, appears to me peculiarly near the judgment seat of Christ; and how shall I better close my ministerial labours among you, than by pointing you thither? I know not, indeed, what Providence may yet have in store for me in this world; but the impression is strong within me, that my work on earth is nearly ended - that the toils and sufferings of this life, at least, are almost over. Under this apprehension, while every thing earthly sinks in value, every thing relating to another world acquires an indescribable interest. How solemn then the consideration, that the account of my ministry in this place is now sealed up to the judgment of the great day. There I shall soon meet you all; and that account will be opened - opened, I trust, to the everlasting joy of some - opened, I fear, to the everlasting grief of others.

There must those meet me, who have disbelieved and despised the message of the Lord which I have brought. I would hope, indeed, their number will be small: for how terrible is it to be *given up to strong delusions to believe a lie, that they might be damned, because they believed not the truth!* How dreadful to make God a liar, by not receiving the record he has given of his Son! And how fearful a spot, to such, must be the judgment-seat of Christ!

Those who have been awakened under my ministry, but have fallen away, must also meet me at the judgment. And alas, I fear there are many such who now hear me. What other class of my hearers have I so plainly and repeatedly warned? What others have resisted so much? What others will awake to greater agony, if they repent not before the trumpet called them to the judgment?

Those too, who, through a careless or a worldly spirit, have neglected the warnings and invitations of the gospel they have heard from my lips, must meet me soon at the final judgment. These usually constitute the majority of every congregation. And must I leave so many in a condition so perilous! Even should I be finally cast away, and sink to perdition with them, how will this aggravate rather than alleviate their doom. Oh, when they see me stretch out these imploring hands for the last time, beseeching them to be reconciled to God, will they not be persuaded, even at this late hour, to turn and live? *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim How shall I deliver thee, Israel?*

Are there any in this assembly who have been converted under my ministration? My meeting with such at the judgment will be peculiarly solemn and interesting. Oh, what fulness of joy it would be, to present them to the Lamb and say, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me! And to see the immortal crowns glittering on their heads, and to hear them joining in the everlasting song of redeeming love. But O, ye lambs of the flock, I tremble for you, lest you should be lost in the wide wilderness you are now passing over. My parting exhortation therefore is, *Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

Christian brethren, members of the church of Christ, I need not remind you how soon we shall meet in judgment. And if in that trying hour I shall be found on the left hand, O, let none of your number be found with me. The gospel I have preached will save you if you obey it; and if you are faithful unto death, you are sure of a crown of life. Nor will it disturb or diminish your eternal joys, though your minister be missing there. But should it so happen, through the boundless mercy of God in Christ, that he should enter with you into everlasting rest, how happy that meeting! how blessed that eternity. We shall know no more of the vicissitudes of earth, that now blast our hopes and cloud our prospects. Nor sickness, nor sin, nor death, will more intervene to produce the painful separations we now experience. Oh my dearly beloved brethren, if the hope of that everlasting union be well grounded within us, we may smile at the storms that now thicken around us. If there be a world where the blighting influence of sin can never reach us, and if the space between us and that world be so short, and there we shall soon meet to part no more, then may we, with a cheerful hope, pronounce the mutual, the brief, *farewell.*

Delivered

At Conway, October (?), 1825

## Sermon 540 Ordination of Mann et al

[Mann et al. Ordinations and Installations, 1844-1850,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series C, Box 9: folder 13]

I Timothy 3:1

*This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*

*[This sermon has many crossed out paragraphs as well as entire pages, most of which are not transcribed. See comments on the catholic churches of Europe. Hitchcock also comments on assuming the pastorship of the college church in 1845.]*

How strangely do time and circumstances change the meanings of words! The term *bishop* affords a good illustration. When first used in the epistles, the ancient Christians understood by it, a man whom they themselves had chosen as their minister, or pastor, and who was consecrated, or ordained to that work, by some solemn yet simple rite, such as prayer and the imposition of hands by the presbytery. He then became the bishop, or overseer, for this is the literal meaning of the word. If a particular church, and though a church might have several bishops on account of its size, yet in those times, it does not appear that any bishop was the overseer of several churches. He was simply the presbyter, or elder, or, as we say in these days, the minister, or pastor, of a local church; as is most manifest from the history of Paul's visit to the church at Ephesus. *From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church:* and in his address to them, he says, *take heed, therefore, into yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers*, or bishops; as the word might with equal propriety have been translated. In short, it was the business of the bishop, or elder, in apostolic times, to preach the Gospel, perform pastoral duties, and to do whatever else pertains to the ministerial office in one of the independent churches of our country at the present day.

But how different is all this from the modern idea of a bishop! In all countries the term denotes a prelate who is appointed to rule over a diocese, or number of churches, and inferior clergy. In no case have the church as a body any voice in his election; but in Catholic countries, he is appointed by the pope; in the Greek church, by the patriarch of Constantinople; in England by the king; and in this country, by the convocation of bishops. It is not his business to preach the Gospel, except occasionally, nor to perform pastoral duties. In apostolic times the bishop was a man of small income, who perhaps could call no habitation his own, and like Christ and Paul, was perhaps compelled to labour with his hands to minister to his own necessities. But now we associate with the prelatical office, the idea of a princely income, and the palace for the episcopal residence. Formerly the bishop had little more concern with political affairs than to exhort men to be subject to the existing government, and to pray for rulers: but now, at least in one country, the bishop is *ex officio* a peer of the realm, and sits and votes in the House of Lords, and the chief bishop places the crown upon the royal head; while in another country, the chief bishop, or pope, is himself the political ruler of the land. In primitive times no virtue was more strenuously insisted upon and practiced by the bishop, than temperance; and it required the injunction of an inspired apostle to induce one of this description to use a little wine for feeble health. But in modern times, with some honorable exceptions, the table of luxury never groans more heavily, nor is more splendidly spread, than in the episcopal palace, and on the other side of the Atlantic at least the wine cup is actually kept in the

vestry of the church to strengthen the bishop when he preaches in the pulpit. Anciently the bishop's diocese was so narrow that it needed only a pilgrim's staff and sandals for its perambulation; nor would his scanty purse admit of foreign travel, unless it was an occasional excursion into some region where the Gospel had never been carried that he might plant a new church; then love to Christ was the only essential outfit. But when the modern European bishop makes his triennial visitation through his wide diocese, or his sunnier excursion to a fashionable resort, an elegant carriage, with outsiders in livery, is thought appropriate to his dignity and office. In early times, one bishop, or elder, claimed no superiority over others, and exercised no authority, except that which resulted from superior piety or wisdom. But in modern days, the bishops power over the inferior clergy is well nigh absolute; and holding in his hands, as he usually does, a large number of livings, he can, if he chooses, exercise a sway over the whole church and clergy of his diocese so nearly unlimited, as justly to be styled, *lording it over God's heritage*.

If these statements are correct, it is obvious, that while the modern as well as the ancient bishops could assent to the truth of the declaration in my text, that the office of the bishop is a good work, it might be for very different reasons. The modern bishop might so consider it because it places him at once in a condition of pecuniary affluence, and enables him to gratify largely a love of show and luxury: because it raises him to familiar intercourse with the highest circles of society: because it gratifies a love of political distinction: because it enables him to exercise high and almost absolute authority over large bodies of men: because it furnishes him with a large amount of literary leisure: and finally because he can accept and enjoy all these worldly emoluments, with the assurance of a large portion of the church that they are appropriate to his office.

On the other hand, the ancient bishop felt his official functions to be a good work, because it gratified the strongest desire of his heart, viz. to glorify God and do good to man: because it placed him in most favorable circumstances for the promotion of his own piety: because it was most favorable to personal happiness, by furnishing constant employment congenial to his taste, by inducing the most thorough temperance, by keeping him on good terms with conscience, and producing a cheerful state of mind, even amid reproaches and discouragements. I do not deny that the modern bishop, even in the midst of his eternal splendors and worldly temptations, maybe be governed by motives as pure as these; as I know many have been. I only say, that the worldly attractions of the modern bishopric are so powerful, that they may alone excite a strong desire to attain it, and make the possessor feel that the work is a good one.

It would be appropriate to my object on this occasion and directly in keeping with the text, were I to go into a detailed examination of this summary of motives operating upon the ancient and modern bishop. For my object is to point out in what manner the work of the ministry must be performed, in order to make it in the highest sense a good one; good and its performance and good in its results, to the minister and to his people. But I prefer to take a different and I hope a more instructive mode of arriving at the same point. I propose in the first place, to pass in review various ways that seem to me defective, in which men have attempted to discharge the duties of a bishop; and from thence, in the second place, to deduce the mode of performing that work which is sanctioned by the bible and meets the approbation of God.

I trust it is unnecessary before this church, to go into a formal proof that the meaning which the primitive Christians attached to the word bishop is the true and scriptural meaning instead of the modern ideas so extensively embraced. I say extensively embraced, but not universally. For most of the Pilgrims and their descendents, have ever been the strenuous advocates for the ancient interpretation

of the term. We believe all ministers of the Gospel, qualified for their work, to be strictly and truly bishops; and that they all have equal rank, except as they differ in piety, talents, or age. And it is the less necessary to go into a laboured proof of this present position, because at this day, nearly all the advocates of piety admit that the bishops, presbyters, and elders, mentioned in the New Testament, were synonymous. In my subsequent remarks, then, I include all ministers of the Gospel under the name of bishops, but I proceed to review the works which seem to me more or less defective in which they have attempted to fulfill their office.

As we proceed in this examination we shall find that men's use of the proper work of a bishop, or minister, have varied almost in direct proportion to the importance which they have attached to forms and ceremonies in religion. There is a strong yet strange disposition in the human mind, to believe a mysterious efficacy to be connected with religious rites. Designing and crafting priests have, in every age, taken advantage of this principle to impose a heavy ceremonial bondage upon their fellow men, and to produce the conviction that they alone are the consecrated depositories of spiritual blessings. The grand object stated in the bible for sending out ministers into the world, is to preach the Gospel to every creature. But this object has been thrust into the background, and ceremonial observances, a rigid attention to all the prescriptions of the corrupt priesthood - misnamed the successors of the apostles - has taken the place of faith and repentance. In the Greek church embracing not less than 30,000,000 of the human family, preaching is in a great measure discontinued. Indeed, under the czar Alexis, preaching in Russia was strictly forbidden, to prevent the promulgation of novel doctrines. Nor is there any need of preaching, in order to give employment to the clergy: for their church service occupies more than twenty folio volumes; and their fasts and festivals are so numerous, that there is more than one saint assigned to each day in the year. And besides, that church regard tradition as of equal authority with the bible; and have increased the two simple sacraments of the bible to seven; so that the recitation of this voluminous ritual, the celebration of the virtues of so many saints, the promulgation of endless traditions, and the performance of a multitude of ceremonies can leave neither time nor inclination for preaching the great truths of the Gospel.

In the papal church, embracing not less than 80,000,000, the case is no better. They have an equal number of fast and holidays and sacraments to observe and of saints to celebrate; as many prayers to the virgin to the Saints and for the dead to be repeated; as many masses to be performed; and last, though not least, as much time to be devoted to the confessional; that impious usurpation of the prerogatives of Jehovah; for *who can forgive sins but God only?* In short, both in the Greek and the papal church, the beautiful native features of the Gospel of Christ are covered up by the meretricious decorations invented by a corrupt priesthood.

*[The following six paragraphs appear in faded ink on pages 5 – 9 of the scanned document. They may have been added after Hitchcock's trip to Europe in 1850.]*

To confirm and illustrate these statements and to show that I do not exaggerate or misrepresent would that I could conduct my hearers this sabbath morning through some of the renowned and splendid cities of Continental Europe. Should you pass up the Rhine for instance and as you gazed upon its magnificent scenery and drank in the air of its vineyard hills and felt the awe inspired by its towering and overhanging castles your thoughts could not but rise to the God who had fashioned the landscape and caused the iron ages of feudal warfare to disappear. And as you passed by city after city and spire after spire rising above the battlements you would feel as if it would be delightful to visit those churches and unite in the worship of Jehovah on this holy morning. But as you enter those cities - Cologne for example - you would be surprised to find the streets more crowded and noisy, the market and the shops busy



than on other days.

Yet a portion of the people would be found going to the church: and as you entered your senses would indeed be engrossed with sights and sounds of surpassing attractions. The architectural magnificence of the arches and aisles and domes of the lofty cathedral would cause you to praise and silently admire: the splendid paintings upon the walls and the ceilings: the images of saints and especially of the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus of solid gold or silver or plate the exquisite carvings in wood or marble the altar and the sacristy and the side chapel wound with gold and sparkling with precious stones the fruit of princely dominions for centuries would amaze you by their splendour. And then the immense organ would pour its lofty melody upon your ear and near the altar you would see the gold coated priests bowing before the shrine while attendants around were waving their vessels of incense filling the church with grateful odours and the lofty wax candles were illuminating the altar and the chancel: the whole scene being in fact as impressive to the senses as human ingenuity and princely treasures could make it. It might be too that your eye would rest on many a sacred relic - a piece of the true cross for instance - the sponge filled with vinegar offered to Christ - his swaddling clothes in the manger and the scarf worn by our Saviour at his crucifixion the cord that bound his hands a nail of the cross etc. etc. (I name only a few of those relics which a crown prince slipped into the hands of the sacrister brought under my own eye). Indeed in some chambers the skulls and other bones of some thousands of females martyrs fill the walls and the ceilings with hideous sights. Very likely too it may be Assumption day or some other festival dedicated to the virgin: and then you will probably see as you enter the church wreaths of flowers not only on the virgin's image but forming a triumphal arch at the entrance with such an inscription as this:

*O clemens, O pia;  
O dulcis Virgo Maria.*

*[Source: The Salve Regina, a hymn or prayer dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century]*

And this would be all which you would witness in that cathedral most probably of the worship of God and you would see the multitudes departing after dipping their fingers in the consecrated water at the entrance and making the sign of the cross – and feeling satisfied with such mummary - the remainder of the sabbath they would pass as a holiday wherever inclination should lead them.

Would that I could conduct my hearers to the chapel of the Hotel des Invalides in Paris at the hour of eleven on sabbath morning. This is an establishment where aged infirm and crippled soldiers are maintained at the public expense and here you see the meager remnants of a hundred battle fields. Precisely at the hour of eleven these old veterans take up their positions in opposite ranks along the nave of the church with drawn swords or pikes: while on their flank are ranged skillful military musicians. The Governor of the place and other officers having entered in military dress and manner the powerful organ of the church the droning of the fifes and many other instruments as it seemed to me unite in pouring forth the most powerful and for such music the sweetest that I have ever heard. The splendid *Te Deum* resounded through the echoing church and as I judged from the actions of the priest in the chancel a prayer was chanted in the same magnificent style for about half an hour. Then in true military taste the word of command was given the music ceased the line of march was taken up by the officers and invalids. The pageant disappeared and the remainder of the day was given up to promenading through the gardens and the Tuileries or the Elysian Fields or wherever else fancy might invite. And this was was enough of worship to satisfy the military invalids just ready to sink into the

grave: enough because his spiritual leaders never hinted to him that anything more was essential to his salvation.

Allow me to describe to you one other spot. Nothing is more common in papal countries than to meet by the roadside with images of various saints representing Christ on the cross or the Virgin with the infant Jesus. Sometimes these figures are enclosed in a glazed box and are ornamented with gold and silver. In going through one of the wildest passes in the Alps of Savoy I met with one of these oratories as they are sometimes called, with an image of the Virgin and her son beneath which was the following inscription: *Lord P. J. Rey, Bishop of Arney, grants an indulgence of 40 days to any one who will recite one Pater one Ave Maria and one act of contrition before this Oratory – 1836. Vive Jesus! Vive Maria!* Near to this spot lies Trifelin one of the loftiest and most singular villages of the Alps: above you hang the ragged cliffs of the mountains and at a distance Mont Blanc and its surrounding peaks with their eternal brows risen in solemn grandeur and awakens in every pious heart a deep reverence for that Infinite Power who piled up these awful summits for the exhibition of His glory! Oh how sickening to me in such a spot with this impious usurpation of Jehovah's prerogative and offering forgiveness not for past sins but for those to be hereafter committed. Yet there for fourteen years has this blasphemous placard been permitted by the ignorant Savoyards to insult God in the face of his sublimest works. But the traveller in Continental Europe will meet with such impieties at almost every step and every where find evidence that while the splendid forms of religion remain vitality has been smothered.

These remarks do not imply that in most churches there are no individual examples of ministerial fidelity; no Archbishop of Cambray, who is a faithful pastor; no Massillon and Baudelaire to thunder in the ears of royalty, *thou art the man*. But it cannot be denied, that many things in the creeds, the ceremonies, and preachings of those churches encourage men in the belief that if they conform rigidly to the prescriptions of the ritual, their salvation is safe. If they are diligent in performing their *Ave Marias* and *Pater Nosters*, go regularly to their confessional, call for extreme unction when about to die, and fee well the surviving priest to pray for the repose of their departed souls, their salvation is secure. Oh how melancholy is this picture to us, who believe most piously, that *except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*, and that *by deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified*: how melancholy, I say, to know, that these indispensable truths are never brought before the minds of the large majority of the Christian world, and that they are flattered into the fatal belief that God will accept of mere external observances for holiness of heart. How painful too, to find many intelligent men - men perhaps eminent and keen sighted in science - so easily falling in with the absurd idea that a mere man, like themselves, nay, it may be a wicked man, just because he has been ordained as a priest, has the authority to forgive sins. How sad also to think that the grand business of the thousands of bishops attached to these communions, is not to convert men, not to place the bible in their hands that they might learn the way of life for themselves, but to keep it out of the reach of the great mass of the community, in order to sustain and perpetuate a system which substitutes tradition and councils for the bible, intolerance and persecution for Christian charity, confessions to man for penitence before God, and penances, and prayers, and masses, and pecuniary offerings, for a new heart and a holy life. And then, how disheartening prospect for the future; when we think how long and arduous must be the struggle before these false systems will give way to the power of truth. Long after the banner of the cross shall have waived on every heathen pagoda, nay, if I prophecy aright, long after the bible shall have supplanted the koran in every mosque and minaret, the religion of forms, planted deep in the self righteousness and corruption of the human heart, made venerable by its antiquity, and propped up by the triple leagues of despotic rulers, shall present its yet massive and unbroken ramparts, to be breached only in *the battle of that great day of God Almighty*.

But the mischievous principle that a mysterious transforming efficacy attaches to religious rites when performed by a regularly ordained priest, is not confined to the Greek and papal churches. The heaven has wrought powerfully in the Protestant world though under a form less revolting to common sense. In most Lutheran churches you meet with the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; which teaches that when the rite of baptism is properly administered, the subject receives a new heart, so as to become a child of God, a member of Christ, an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Hence the main enquiry with the Lutheran is, whether he has been regularly baptized: and if so, the inference is unavoidable that he has been regenerated and will be saved unless he apostatize: and if we, who discard this doctrine, express doubts and fears in regard to our own Christian character, he does not understand us, since it is not a difficult matter to ascertain certainly, whether we have been baptized as the Gospel requires.

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration, it is well known, is maintained by the high church portion of the Episcopalians, both in England and this country. Indeed, the formularies of that church require the officiating clergyman after the baptism of an infant to say, *we yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into the holy church.*

Now it is perfectly obvious that such views as these, must greatly modify ministerial labours. If a man honestly believes that he possesses the power by the performance of a simple rite, to communicate the Holy Ghost, he ought as a benevolent bishop to make it the great object of his labours to persuade men to receive baptism as at his hands, and to present their children for the same ordinance. And when they have been thus regenerated, the drift of his preaching should be to lead Christians, that is the baptized to grow in grace, and to persevere to the end. But on the other hand, we, who believe that there is no promise of regeneration in baptism and that judging by facts, very few are regenerated in that ordinance, make it the first objection object of our preaching, not to bring men into the church, but into the kingdom of Christ, by repentance and regeneration. And we make the appeal exclusively to a man's internal experience and to his life, whether he has been renewed, not to the performance of any external rite. With our views, we should tremble for the final account of our stewardship, did we give any such intimation. For we well know how easy it is to persuade men in religion to substitute its form for its power. In the Lutheran and Episcopal churches, we well know that much in the preaching contradicts the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and that very many receive it only in a much modified form. But still its wide adoption and the strong language of the liturgy of the latter church, must exert a most disastrous influence both upon bishops and people. The minister cannot feel that deep anxiety for the conversion of his hearers which Paul felt, and his hearers will be apt to indulge the secret hope that renewing grace was imparted to them in the baptismal font.

*[The next paragraph has been crossed out in pencil and is not transcribed. The transcription resumes with pages 12 and 13. An insert over the same paragraph appears to be a rewording of the same ideas and is not transcribed.]*

But I am dwelling too long upon foreign and gross perversions of the ministerial functions. Let us come near home, and examine certain modes of performing the work of a bishop, which exist in our own land, which are liable to obstructions. And as preaching, either publicly or privately, is his principal work, we will direct our attention chiefly to this point.

The substitution of the morality of the Gospel for its doctrines by the preacher, and of the duties and privileges of Christians for exhortations to impenitent sinners, has long been a theme of animadversion by those who believe that a new heart is the very first step in religion, and that all external morality, not

founded upon a new life in the soul, implanted by the Holy Ghost, is utterly defective in the sight of God. Not only does this kind of preaching fail to prepare a man for heaven, but it is almost equally powerless as a means of promoting visible morality. If men have not a conviction of the deep depravity of the human heart, of their need of Divine Grace, and of pardon through Christ crucified, and of the certainty of eternal punishment, you will in vain urge upon them reformations in external morality, unless you can prove that they will thereby promote and their temporal interests. And since the experiment has been tried so often, and always failed, it is amazing that men should persist in believing that reformation in morals will follow their eloquent exhibition concerning virtue and vice, while they leave unprotected, an unrenewed and desperately wicked heart.

*Men there are,  
Men of illustrious name, that have employed  
Years in portraying to admiring crowds,  
In vivid colours, with the magic hand  
Of genius, guided by refining taste,  
The loveliness of virtue, and of vice,  
The hideous features, and in urging all,  
With eloquent tongue, to make the happy choice.  
And at the end, with grief and self reproach,  
Have looked around in vain for the reformed.  
On all the moral field within its reach,  
Their beautiful philosophy has fallen,  
Powerless, as moonlight cold, on the cold snow.  
Convinced at length of this its impotence,  
And taught divinely to proclaim instead  
Messiah crucified, on the same field,  
With joy have they beheld an aspect new,  
From fruits abundant of immortal growth.*

*[Source: Age of Benevolence by C. Wilcox, 1822]*

Such a course as I have now described can be adopted only by those who do not believe what is called the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. But a mode somewhat similar has been followed by some who admit the system of evangelical truth which centres in the cross. In their preaching they take it for granted that their hearers admit the truth of the doctrines and understand them and that they have only practically to apply them. Hence they never attempt logically to state and defend a doctrinal truth. Yet their practical discourses are all formed upon the doctrines; nor can the most fastidious object to them as wanting in evangelical unction. And furthermore, such ministers usually succeed in preserving their churches and parishes united, it may be through a long life. But is this certain evidence that they have done their duty? If so, the papist can urge it with still greater force; since the whole Romish church remain in unbroken harmony from age to age; and he does urge it as certain proof that this church is the true one, and is blessed of God. But in fact more often live in harmony because their consciences are never enough disturbed, nor their minds enough enlightened, to wake up the elements of opposition. The graveyard is a very peaceful and harmonious place. There are no schisms or controversies among its inmates. But it is because there is no life there. And so the papal church is united and harmonious because all spiritual life is gone. Enlighten the catholic and quicken his conscience and he will break loose from the trammels of the church, and think and act for himself. So in the case under consideration men may live in harmony and suppose themselves evangelical, so long as they do not understand the doctrines of religion. But let the minister be removed, and almost invariably these effects follow. As

soon as the doctrines of the Gospel are preached by his successor so as to be distinctly understood, a division takes place in his church, and both parties claim their former ministers as of their opinion; and usually a new society is formed, based on some popular and lax system of religion; nor is it even settled to which party their former pastor approximated most nearly.

I would not dwell on this point any longer, did I not greatly fear that there is a strong tendency in American churches to the adoption of this course; and I consider its operation to be very disastrous. And truly it does seem to me almost as absurd, for a minister to neglect to state and formally defend the doctrines of religion, as for a man whose business is to teach chemistry, to take it for granted that his pupils understand and admit its principles, and that his sole business is to explain their practical application. He might be almost certain that many of his applications would not be understood, through ignorance of fundamental principles. And the great mass of men are no more likely thoroughly to study and master the doctrines of religion. Let the minister do his best to state and defend them, and he will find men still so ignorant of them that much of his practical preaching loses its power. Where is it that churches have continued to flourish most, and to exhibit most of the power of religion from generation to generation? Precisely when they have most faithfully taught the doctrines of religion. Some no doubt refrain from a formal defense of the doctrines through fear of awakening a controversial spirit. But in truth such a spirit is roused by the manner of vindicating the truth, rather than by the fact of doing it. If the minister himself show an uncharitable and controversial Spirit, his people will catch the contagion. But if he defend the truth from an honest conviction of its infinite importance, he may be sure that the effect will be salutary. He cannot preach the truth too plainly, if he do it with such a spirit. Nor need a man fear that any reasonable parishioner will blame him for maintaining distinctly what he believes to be the essence of the Gospel: and no minister ought to leave it doubtful, either while he lives, or after his death, what system of faith he adopts. Transparency, both as to life and doctrine, is a most important ministerial trait.

*[The next paragraph is crossed out in pencil and is not transcribed; transcription resumes on page 16.]*

But while I am thus an advocate for distinct doctrinal preaching, I would not forget that it may become too exclusively and nakedly so. A man of strong intellect, but of little feeling, delighting in the beautiful harmony and proportion of naked truth, is in danger of exhibiting it too often as an unclothed skeleton, divested of flesh and blood, and of course destitute of life. He dare not cover it with muscles and nerves, lest the connection and form of the parts should be concealed. Such a man often succeeds in securing the attention of his audience from year to year, and they are delighted with his clear analysis of the truth. They attend his ministrations because they find them an intellectual feast, and they learn erelong where every pin in the system of theology belongs. But the truth exerts very little influence over their feelings or actions. They hold it in memory; that is they so imprison it that it cannot exert upon them its appropriate influence. They are much more keen sighted to detect a heresy in doctrine, than a heresy in practice. The head is high: but the passage from thence into the heart, is too apt to be closed. But I need not dwell upon the extreme and disproportionate attention to doctrine on the part of the preacher, since the taste of the age is all the other way, and few, save octogenarians, will be tolerated in presenting before their people too large a share of systematic theology

But while there is decidedly less presentation of fundamental doctrinal truth from the pulpit in a logical manner than in former days, the philosophy of doctrines receives far more attention. This is owing in part to the inquisitive spirit of the age, which searches out the reason of everything cognizable in heaven above and earth beneath, and which will not suffer religion to be exempt from the general scrutiny. This spirit has given a direction to the religious controversies of the day, which has turned very

much upon the philosophy of doctrines, though at this moment the contest waxes fierce between formalism and spiritual religion. But the grand question has been for a long time, how to reconcile evangelical doctrines with the hypotheses of intellectual and moral philosophy. As a consequence of a deep interest on such points, their importance becomes magnified in the eyes of the minister, and he feels at length that they are of such vital consequence that they must be brought before the community at large from the pulpit. Nay, he comes at length to believe that the grand reason why religion has made such slow progress in the world, is that they have not understood the metaphysics of ability and inability; nor of Divine and human agency in conversion; nor of the introduction of moral evil into the universe; nor of foreknowledge and decree. And hence he feels as if a grand object with him should be to make these points understood by his hearers; expecting their conversion as a consequence; nor does he find out, often till after a great loss of time and labour, that of all kinds of preaching the discussion of metaphysical subtleties to a common audience is the most unprofitable and least understood. He may indeed convince his hearers that he is a man of profound abilities to be able to discuss such high matters, and make learned distinctions when they can see no difference; but he will not save their souls. This he cannot do, till both minister and people acquiesce in that genuine philosophy, which makes a man willing to believe a truth on the authority of God whether he can, or cannot, trace out all its connections with other truths. I am no enemy to the most searching inquisition into the reason of scripture doctrines. But I do say, that when a man has once decided after most thorough examination that the bible is the word of God and infallible truth, his business is to receive its plain declarations with the most childlike confidence. The mere fact that he cannot freely understand all the connections of these truths with known principles of science, is no reason for rejecting them, unless they seem to him flatly to contradict known principles: and he should be very slow to imagine any such contradiction, when he recollects what overwhelming evidence the bible carries with it that it is the word of God, and that *the foolishness of God is wiser than men*. It may, indeed, be proper, sometimes to discuss the metaphysics (philosophy) of doctrines in the pulpit. But the preacher should never forget how disastrous were the effects of the attempt by the early Christian fathers to amalgamate Platonism and Christianity; nor that in every age, the most fruitful sources of errors and scepticism has been dreamy speculation upon the philosophy of doctrines. How entirely disqualified by the great mass of hearers for understanding such metaphysical discussions: so that what appears clear as noonday to the preacher, often seems to his hearers in the language of David Hume, only *the doubtful solution of a doubtful doubt*.

While I thus strongly object to such dreamy and abstract preaching, let me not be thought to condemn that which is argumentative. I believe the evangelical system of truth to be based upon a rock, and that its doctrines are in perfect harmony with all natural science: and to those who are familiar with science, it is a delightful exercise to trace out this system of harmonizing; and some of the points of connection between religion and physical sciences are capable of popular illustration, so as to be proper subjects for public performances. But even such points, in my humble opinion, are more properly discussed or should only be discussed in a weekly lecture than upon the sabbath; because the direct object of preaching on that day, should be, to explain and enforce the peculiar truths of revelation; and it is a principle of great importance, although rejected by many, that every sermon should contain enough of the Gospel to guide to salvation, the man, who never heard preaching of the Gospel before, and will never hear it again.

*[Several pages of text have been crossed out in pencil and are not transcribed; the transcription resumes on page 22.]*

But it is high time that I should cease my comments upon what I regard as defective modes of

performing the office of a bishop, and that I should proceed, in the second place, to show how the work should be done to make it a good one. And the way has been so prepared that I may use great brevity in its discussion, which also the time and your wearied patience demand.

For the most part general principles in morals and religion, with a faithful conscience to apply them, are a much safer guide than specific rules. And this accordingly is the principle by which the sacred writers are governed in giving their instructions. In respect to the ministerial office, Paul has given in a single sentence, the high and holy object at which a bishop should aim. He speaks of Christ and says, *whom we preach; warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily*. We learn from this passage, that the apostle aimed not only to make every man a Christian but to make every one perfect in Christ, and such ought to be the noble object which every minister should keep in view. Say not that it can never be attained, and therefore should never be attempted. For his arrow which is pointed at a star in the zenith will rise higher than his which is aimed only at the mountaintop. Who knows not what has been the mighty power of the principle in the missionary enterprise - expect great things - attempt great things. The minister knows not how many of his people God will save through his instrumentality: but he does know that *he will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*; and this is enough to lead him to labour for the salvation of all. Just let us see how happily this principle will operate upon him and all his ministerial relations.

See, in the first place, how it will help him in preaching the doctrines of the Gospel. Too often these are proposed as mere speculated points, which have little practical bearing; or they are stripped of their edge and point through fear of offending some individuals of influence, who refuse to embrace them. But this minister from his own experience, and from the testimony of the bible, feels these doctrines to be essential to salvation, and the grand instrument which is to subdue the unrenewed heart and to sanctify the renewed. He therefore preaches them with all possible plainness, less they should be misunderstood and perverted; and with all the earnestness of one who feels as the grand object of his life, the salvation of his people, depends on their reception. He knows, that though he or an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel than that which Paul preached, he should be accursed. He feels deeply with Paul, that necessity is laid upon him, yea woe is unto him, if he preach not this Gospel; and his grand inquiry is not whether this or that man refuse to receive the doctrines, but whether they are working out the salvation of his hearers: for he places no value upon any of them any farther than they have a practical influence and therefore he rarely touches upon their merely speculative bearings.

See, in the second place, how the principle will help the minister in his pastoral labours. Notwithstanding the almost certain success that has ever attended faithful pastoral visitation and personal appeals, I greatly fear that this most important ministerial duty is not made prominent enough at the present day. While a thousand voices urge the useful bishop all along his preparatory course, to aim at a high standard of scholarship, how few exhortations does he hear upon pastoral fidelity. Beaten oil in the sanctuary is, indeed, most important to keep the lamp of truth burning brightly in the house of God: and it is always well to remember, how much better it is to write so as to make a critic turn Christian than to write so as to make a Christian turn critic. But it must also be borne in mind, that he who depends chiefly upon his preaching performances, must calculate upon a barren ministry. Yet if the minister's heart beat strong with the holy purpose of saving and making perfect all his people, he will visit them, and seize every opportunity to impress the careless, convince the sceptic, and confirm the Christian. This principle will not suffer him to rest easy until he knows the state of his people from personal conversation. Nor need he fear, while pressed onward by such a benevolent feeling, that he will ever be regarded as an intruder into the sanctuary of private feeling. For when once convinced that

a man sincerely desires to do good, there is scarcely any heart so savage that it will not listen to his exhortations. Nor will this principle allow the pastor to give over his efforts, though the first, the second, and even the third appeal seem to produce no effect. For the fourth affectionate entreaty may prevail, I have heard of the individual who remains totally unaffected by the repeated appeals of the minister until the latter despairing of success gave over the effort and as was natural for a disappointed man drew an audible sigh. That sigh went to the sinners heart because it convinced him of the sincerity of his advisor and he was roused from his dream of spiritual death. Some pastors neglect a repetition of personal appeals lest it should give offense. But if his heart do deeply feel for an individual he need not fear that such repetition will disgust those whom he would win, for true Christian love is almost omnipotent over the human heart. The wild savage is subdued by it and a reasonable man in enlightened Christian lands will find it hard to resist it.

*[The following paragraph that appears some five pages below on scanned p. 30 seems to refer to the above.]*

A still more remarkable case than the one just mentioned has lately been given in the history of a converted Spanish Monsalvatge who repeated his visits fourteen times to a man of wealth and rank offering him the bible and was kicked out of doors and knocked down till the fifteenth visit when the proud heart of the Spaniard yielded to the power of Christian love and his exhortation to the monk was this: *There is one thing which I wish you to promise me: that is, if you ever again offer the bible to a monster like myself who repulses you fourteen times, go again the fifteenth time to him.* (Introduce this on page \_\_\_\_)

See, in the third place, how this principle aids the minister in his studies. That man is unfit for the ministry at the present day, who has not learnt the immense importance of knowledge for the advancement of true religion. I will admit that in order to be respected, he must be thoroughly conversant with the principles of natural and revealed religion, and with those branches of literature, which bear directly upon the interpretation and elucidation of the scriptures. But this is not enough. There is scarcely a science which is not at some time or other been arrayed against revelation by those who have only a superficial acquaintance with its principles. When astronomy had demonstrated the diurnal and annual motions of the earth, it was said to contradict the express declaration of scripture. When geology had shown the great antiquity of the world, before man's existence upon it, it was said to conflict with the Mosaic cosmogony and chronology. The facts of zoology also, respecting the distributions of animals and plants, had been supposed to prove the deluge of Noah could not have been universal (and that there is a specific diversity among men). Chemistry, it is said, contradicts the bible when it shows that the earth's crust has been already oxidize, or burnt, and therefore can undergo no future conflagration. The physiologist has sometimes maintained that he can prove the soul to be material, and therefore incapable of existence separate from matter, as the scriptures assert. And I know not what religious principle has escaped the assaults of metaphysical philosophy.

Now in almost every parish in the land, we shall find enough knowledge of science to lead some sceptical minds to take refuge in these objections. And if such persons find the minister ignorant of the sciences, they will infer that he would reject Christianity were he acquainted with them. But such an acquaintance on his part would in fact enable him not only to refute these cavils, but to derive from the great library of nature, abundant confirmation of the scriptures, and illustrations of its principles. He will feel constrained, therefore, by a desire to exert the greatest possible influence towards the salvation of his people, to become enough acquainted with science; to understand all its religious bearings; so that the sceptic will find his mouth stopped when he learns that the minister is more familiar than he is, with



those very branches where he derives his cavils. On the same ground, will the pastor find it necessary to maintain at least a running acquaintance with the literature of politics of the day, lest he weaken his influence by being thought a man of narrow views and ignorant of the world.

Nor when the young pastor finds that such an immense field of research demands attention, besides his ordinary preparations for the pulpit, he is very apt to feel as if his study must demand his chief attention and time, and that his duty to his people were done when he has made these interrogations and throws the results before them; and he manifests dissatisfaction if his people break in upon the hours which he usually allots to study, even when their errand relates to the progress of religion. But if his heart burns with a holy desire to save all their souls, he will regard all his studies only as auxiliaries to this great object; and he will be always accessible to the anxious sinner or the inquiring Christian, by day or by night. He will take care to have the way of access to his counsel and confidence as easy as possible. Nor does it seem to me that when any reasonable people find what an amount of study and labour lies upon their pastor's hands, they will need to have him place upon the door of his parlor the admonition, *be short*.

When too, the minister sits down to prepare for the pulpit, what a mighty influence will this solemn desire and purpose for the salvation of his people exert upon him! If he has the feeling of Paul, when he said, *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also being my witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsman, according to the flesh;* if he has this feeling, his discourses will have imparted to them and unction and a power that will wake up the slumbering conscience, and make men earnest in the business of working out their salvation. He will write as if it might be his last opportunity to search some perishing soul, and though his sermons may lack some of the minor graces of rhetoric; they will be truly great and make a deep impression.

See, in the fourth place, how the principle under consideration aids the minister in his closet. The youthful minister may indeed set about his work with too much confidence in his own power. But if God means to bless his labours, he will soon make him feel how weak he is, and lead him to cry out with an [????] response, *old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon*. While he labours as if the whole work depended upon his exertions, he will feel and pray as if it all depended upon God. And when he finds how hard the human heart is, he will put up his intercessions with strong crying and tears to him who is able to save. Should God answer them by converting one or a few souls, it will only stimulate him to urge his suit with greater earnestness and frequency. Nor will discouragement and delay drive him from the throne of grace, so long as the desire for salvation of his people burns in his heart.

See, in the fifth place, how this principle sustains a man under trials and discouragements. Alas, that the man whose intense desire is to bless others, and who is willing to sacrifice everything for their salvation, should ever meet with neglect, ingratitude and abuse, as his reward. But the Saviour of the world did meet them in their severest forms: in what follower of his, therefore, can ever expect exemptions. Nay the malice of the wicked is often bitter and intolerant in proportion to the degree of benevolence which they witness in the man they assail. Thence it never was more violent than towards Jesus Christ. But what a sustaining power there is in benevolence against the assault of malevolence. It not only sustains a man but makes him more desirous of blessing those who curse him. *I will very gladly spend and be spent for you*, says Paul, *though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved*. Well indeed may the benevolent heart feel an increased desire to do those good, who by ingratitude towards their benefactors, and neglect of warnings, manifest a state of heart inevitably fatal to their eternal happiness. And when the truly faithful minister finds his labours thus requited, his most painful feeling

results from the evidence then brought to light, the state of heart among his people that unfits them for heaven. As to himself he is sustained by the consciousness of desiring and having laboured for their best good, and by the certain knowledge, that though misrepresented by men, God knows the state of the case exactly. Though the world frowns upon him, his conscience and his God smile upon him. Though many hate him, he knows that the Saviour sympathizes with him, and that God loves him. And even though he cannot but be sad that the strong desires and purposes of his heart, the salutation of all these people, has not been gratified, he knows that his final reward depends not upon his success, but upon his fidelity.

And now if the works of a bishop be thus performed, is it not emphatically a good one? I say best performed: for no incubus has ever rested more heavily on this wicked world, than an unregenerate self seeking profligate priesthood, and at the very moment this is the darkest cloud that rests on the prospects of man. The last form of wickedness which benevolence shall make resign its hold upon the human family, will be hydra-headed formalism in religion. And when Satan shall gather together the armies of God and Magog, after the millennium is gone by, to compass the camp of the saints about, they will be offered by an exasperated and desperate priesthood. But on the other hand the honorable, humble, devoted, self denying, hard working bishop, has ever been, is now, and ever will be one of the greatest blessings which heaven bestows. The labours indeed for the most part in obscurity. The world perhaps speaks of him as useful, but they have passed him by, and press on just to crown with laurels the hero returned from the battle field, or listen to the noisy demagogue, or to the strains of eloquence in the halls of legislation. But after all the faithful pastor, however obscure his station, is neither unknown nor disregarded. Those heavenly visitants, who come to our world on errands of mercy, turn with disgust from the starred and lauded hero, and pass with indifference the council chambers of princes, the parliaments of monarchy, and the congresses of republicanism, but watch with intense interest the labours and results of the devoted minister. And when they return to heaven, the shining ranks of thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, listening intently to the details of the pastor's labours, but would hiss the speaker from his place, were he to attempt this detail of earth's politics, or military renown. And in fact the influences that emanate from a faithful bishop's labours are far more important upon the destinies of the universe, than all the decisions of human government, which reach not beyond the grave. He who has been instrumental of the conversion of a single soul, has done more to exalt the future condition of the universe, and to swell the tide of its happiness, than all the measures of mere politicians and the victories of warriors. The inhabitants of heaven know this, and therefore do they come as a cloud of witnesses around the faithful pastor, and watch him with deep interest at every step. He does indeed stand out upon the great theater of the universe, and is made a spectacle to the world to men and to angels; and when his labours are ended here, the same witnesses shall be the first to meet him at the portals of heaven, and upon their golden harps to greet him with the song of welcome.

*Servant of God, well done!  
Rest from thy loved employ!  
And while eternal ages run,  
Enter thy Master's joy.*

*[Source: Hymn by James Montgomery, 1854]*

*[This fragment on page 29 of the scanned document seems to refer to an ordained minister who is being installed in a new church or returning to the ministry after other work. This might be Rev. Joseph Vaill, although the insert below seems to refer to him more specifically.]*

To such a noble work and upon a theater surrounded by such an august cloud of witnesses my respected brother and you are reintroduced today. Your long and successful experience in this work in other places renders it almost superfluous for me to say that by the solemnities of this occasion...

*[This insert that appears on page 31 of the scanned document may refer to Rev. Joseph Vaill.]*

For we bring you today no novice in the ministerial work: but one who in more than one other important church has had the seal of God's approbation upon his labours: and who has suspended the regular exercise of his ministerial functions only to perform a most important work for a literary institution which was founded mainly to educate men to preach the gospel. And having now executed that work he comes among this people with the ample fruits not only of study but of long and successful experience ready as I believe to consecrate them all to your everlasting good. I feel a strong confidence therefore that you will justly appreciate the blessing etc.

*[Several pages are crossed out in pencil and are not transcribed. The transcription resumes on the ride side of page 33 in the scanned document.]*

In presenting the duties of the ministerial office before this audience today, I have had three prominent objects in view.

The first is to bring what I conceived to be scriptural views of the functions of a bishop prominently before those who are looking forward to this office.

It is certainly a most melancholy feature in the moral aspect of the world that in a vast majority of cases the Christian ministry not only fails of securing the salvation of men but actually proves the grand means by which conscience is put asleep and the soul is led to trust in a fatal determinism - expecting salvation in a way which the bible pointedly condemns. You may say that this is an uncharitable judgment. But it is only saying that men can be justified only by faith in Jesus Christ: for with a vast majority of nominally Christian ministers and bishops this doctrine is not made the ground of salvation: but other things are thrust into its place and men are bid to confide in them. How is it uncharitable to say that there is *salvation in none other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved: but though we or an angel out of heaven, preach any other Gospel he will be accursed?* If this is uncharitable the bible is uncharitable.

But this is not the whole of the case. Even in those churches where the true Gospel is more or less preached how is the influence of many ministers almost neutralized by some erroneous or defective mode of presenting it so that their ministry becomes exceedingly barren and they are compelled as they look back in sadness upon to say, *we have laboured in vain and spent our strength for naught.* It is exceedingly important therefore for every one aiming at this high and holy office to ponder well upon the manner in which its functions are to be performed. Men do this where only temporal results depend upon the manner in which they execute important tasks. But here everlasting consequences are depending and every aspirant after this office should feel a trembling solicitude to make every blow effective: so that he may *turn many to righteousness and shine hereafter as the brightest of the firmament and as the stars forever.* The man who was probably the means of the conversion of more souls than any other minister in New England was so deeply sensible of the difficulties and responsibilities of the ministerial work that when first licensed he shrunk from labour among the older and established churches and went into the obscure and neglected parts of the country, where, if not presented by him, the Gospel would not have been preached at all. How different his views from those

of many who feel even upon their first assumption of the sacred office that such are their talents acquisitions and piety that they are awfully competent to take charge of the largest and most cultivated and most literary churches of the land. And if they do enter such a field, how different usually is result of this labour, from that of such a man as Asahel Nettleton!

The second object I have had in view, in this discussion of the subject, has been to induce those Christian young men who have not yet chosen their profession, to deliberate long and pray much, before they give the preference to any secular office for life, over that of a minister of Christ.

The cry has gone forth and been reiterated through our literary institutions that the ministry is full to overflowing and that nothing but the most commanding talents and personal accomplishments can secure a man a field of labour or even an opportunity to do good upon the humblest scale in the clerical office. The consequence is that many of excellent qualifications for the ministerial office are looking to secular professions. But the alarm is to a great extent a false one. And it is a hasty conclusion consequence of it, for a young man who has a strong desire to do good to turn away from a profession which of all other affords the best opportunity. What! Is there no place in this wide and wicked world where a humble and well educated young man can labour successfully for human salvation! True he may be compelled to occupy a more humble sphere than formerly: but if he has the right spirit this will be more agreeable to him at first than to be thrust forward too prominently. A small field and somewhat obscure is just the place where Providence has trained and disciplined many of the ablest and most successful ministries of the Gospel: and for a young man to be called at once from the theological seminary into some important pulpit is often an indication that God does not intend such a man to be very useful. The truth is, and let every truly pious young man take encouragement from this truth – that if a man has an ardent desire to do good as a minister, Providence will provide a field for him to work in. And though he may be useful in other pursuits yet as a bishop he can be most so. And let no one forget that where a man is most useful there he will be most happy. No matter how obscure his station - no matter if he have to contend with opposition and reproach yet if he is labouring where and in the manner God would have him he has the element of happiness within his bosom and he may bid defiance to all external causes of misery. On the other hand no matter how bright and fascinating the field of worldly ambition he has entered, nor how complacently the world smiles upon him, yet if he is not in that profession for which God intended him he will be miserable because the sword of an accusing conscience will ever be suspended by a hair over his head. It may indeed be true that the clerical office may be almost full in the older and larger churches of land. But it is the business of Christians to make aggressions upon the empire of sin and Satan in every direction and to carry the torch of divine truth into every dark region and set up the standard of the cross on every spot where irreligion reigns. If the young man supposes the Christian ministry a bed of ease which it is the duty of others to prepare for him and that he has nothing to do but to lie down on it while the breezes of popular favour lull him to repose then I say he has not the right spirit and the farther he keeps away from the Christian ministry the better. But if he has a strong desire to do good and is willing to encounter difficulties and where he cannot find to force his way then he will indeed realize the work of a bishop is a good one - good for him and good for others - balm for his heart while he lives - a pillow for his dying hour, and a cross of glory for his immortality. (See two leaves back.)

*[The following three paragraphs appear in an insert on pages 36 (right side) to 38 in the scanned document.]*

\*See bottom of fifth page following

A third object I have had in view today is to awaken gratitude in all our hearts that in a land where as yet religion is not smothered by a mere load of forms and superstitious observances and where we can labour without obstruction in the cause of human salvation.

To get a deep impression of our exalted privileges in these respects one needs to traverse those countries of continental Europe where papacy is the dominant religious system. That church fostered by the government and having possession of nearly all the splendid cathedrals and churches is able to keep all other denominations in a depressed condition. Protestant churches do indeed exist in most of those countries: but they struggle against almost insuperable difficulties attracting to their communion only a few resolute and conscientious men who have the moral courage to go in the face of popular opinion and governmental influence. Nor is this the worst: for the greater part of these churches have adopted opinions - particularly that of baptismal regeneration - such as eat out the life of religion and leave little worth contending for. There are however in all these countries a few churches that maintain the true system of the Gospel and exhibit the power of religion in their lives and feel it in their hearts. But they are scarcely less obnoxious to their Protestant brethren than to the Papists. By both they are regarded as dreamy fanatics and are branded with odious names and considered proper objects of ridicule if not of persecution. If you search them out you will find them in some humble church in some obscure corner of the city and most likely made up of those who have little property or influence. Think then how almost hopeless their efforts must be to propagate spiritual religion. The power and importance of the state are against them as are the authority and prejudices of the leading churches both papal and Protestant. I verily believe that in such circumstances their hope of propagating these sentiments and converting men is much less than the missionary may expect among the most degraded heathen. And it needs a martyr's spirit and an apostle's zeal to labour against such fearful odds.

But what a contrast to all this is exhibited in our condition. Here no state religion pours upon the humbled individual who is labouring in the cause of spiritual religion by whatever name he is called. And often prejudice and vituperation awaken sympathy for those who are honestly labouring for the truth: so that a man has only to see to it that he understands the Gospel and honestly desires the good of his fellow man. He need not fear but God will help him and that right early. In Continental Europe a man may strike a hundred blows for the truth and with no other effect but to have them rebound and fall upon himself: but here every honest and well directed blow is sure to tell upon the progress of religion. Yet we sometimes hear men among us complain that they cannot find a field to labour in. Would that such could pass over the Atlantic and see how narrow and discouraging is the field where their brethren are labouring. They would come back I know with a song of gratitude on their lips and renewed courage in their hearts convinced that no where on earth is the opportunity for doing good so exciting and promising as here. Would I could impress this truth upon all who hear me so many of whom are toiling through years of study and labour in the hopes of gaining an ample preparation for doing good. Let them be assured that God has no where given man more encouragement to persevere in such an enterprise. *Give me a place to stand on*, said an ancient mechanic, *and I will move the world*. We have got the place to stand on and the lever too is in our hands that needs only to be moved in order to heave up into the day light of Christianity and science a world of ignorance and sin. Oh what a privilege is ours! The responsibility is proportionably great. Let us not shrink from it but joyfully throw all our energies into the work and not only shall we approve ourselves to God but he will crown our efforts with success.

According to my apprehension of the scriptural description of a true bishop transparency of character as already suggested is among the most prominent items. Those to whom he ministers have a right to know precisely what are his views of Christian doctrine and Christian practice. He should have no

doctrines that are esoteric: no cunning plans to bring in privily new and unpalatable tenets - no undercurrent moving differently from that at the surface. His court should be straight forward and his hearers should know him so well as to be able to predict his course. Then will they have no cause to complain of him even though they do not relish his views - for he preaches only that which he honestly believes to be important and only what he avowed his determination to preach before he became a pastor.

*[The following four paragraphs refer to now President Hitchcock's assumption of the pastorship on the college chapel in May, 1845.]*

The circumstances in which I resume the pastoral office, after a suspension of its functions for nearly twenty years, are quite peculiar, and some of them disheartening. The small number of professors of religion here, who have united themselves to the church, is one discouraging circumstance: for it is impossible that those who are connected with different and distant churches should feel that sympathy with one another and that deep interest in the progress of religion in this community, which they would feel if linked together by the same covenant. This is indeed a matter that must be left to the option of every individual and I well understand that it must often be trying for a person to sever his relations to a church where belong his kindred according to the flesh and where perhaps the transforming grace of God first turned his heart to heavenly themes. And furthermore he may perhaps enquire with too much truth that he shall obtain no peculiar advantages to himself by a change of his relations. But admitting all this to be true I still enquire whether by such a change he cannot exert a better influence here in the cause of religion: and if so does not Christian benevolence require him to make what he perhaps considers a sacrifice since it may make him instrumental of the salvation of souls.

Another trying circumstance in resuming the pastoral office is that its duties are expected to occupy only a small portion of my time since most of it is imperiously demanded for other calls. Not from the views which I have presented today you will learn that the whole of one's time and strength is too little for the faithful discharge of the ministerial functions even in a small community. You may indeed suppose that as to the supply of the pulpit I may fall back upon preparations made in years past. I know indeed that truth is the same whether contained in a discourse prepared yesterday or twenty years ago and that age neither destroys good writing or improves that which is bad. But though heaven may not be able to fix the date when the discourse was prepared yet if the preacher is obliged to use his early preparations he will deeply feel if I may judge from my own experience a want of that freshness and present interest which a sermon recently written will exert and which will in fact give a deeper effect to his performance. And then we are very apt to feel that practice and experience have not lavished their lessons upon us in vain. So that I confess that my own wish is to make a resort to former preparations as infrequently as possible. And yet with the onerous crowd of other duties that call upon me and even with the aid of my colleagues I know not how far my resolutions may be carried into effect.

One other circumstance in our condition I hardly know whether to speak of as favorable or unfavorable. We are in fact living at this moment in the midst of a revival of religion and how can a minister of the Gospel but regard this as a most favorable circumstance? As the very consummation of his prayers and hopes? Alas what I am obliged to add is that we seem to feel none of the influence of this revival. What a strange anomaly is it that while many whom we daily meet and with whom we occasionally worship are deeply affected and have begun to sing the new song there should be in our hearts as deep an apathy as ever! What shall we think of it? We have often heard of an *imperium in imperio*. Do they not exist together in this place? While the empire of Christ prevails around us does not the empire of sin and Satan reign within us. And yet it is certainly a fearful state of things in the church when it remains

unaffected in the midst of the displays of Divine grace and like *the heath in the desert sees not when good cometh*. Does it not look as if that church were abandoned of God and would ere long experience his special judgments. Oh that I could know there were some souls among us who were beginning to wrestle with the angel of the covenant and that there might be heard at least one voice enquiring the way to salvation! Then would discouragement give place to hope and holy joy.

But though these circumstances make the work of a bishop here no sinecure or object of worldly ambition nevertheless I cannot but view it as a good work. Indeed among the many discouraging and unpleasant things which have attended my recent change of position in this Institution I confess that the opportunity to resume the pastoral office which an enfeebled constitution compelled me to abandon many years ago affords me real satisfaction. Pastoral labours and ministerial services though limited may indeed frustrate literary plans long cherished and partially exerted. But should they prove instrumental in the conversion of one soul they would accomplish more good and secure more happiness to myself and the world than a whole life of eminent success in literature and science. Let me then aspire after this honour and this happiness. Too little of life indeed remains to me and too little vigour in a constitution long since shattered in the conflicts of life to allow me to hope for long continued labour or for eminent success. Join me therefore my Christian brethren in the fervent prayer that however short may be my ministry it may not be wholly a barren one and when we meet on mount Zion above a louder and sweeter note of praise commiserate our union on earth.

At Hardwick at the ordination of Mr. Asa Mann June 19<sup>th</sup> 1844

Amherst College May 1845

Somers, Ct. at Installation of Rev. Mr. Vaill August 6<sup>th</sup> 1845

At West Granville July 22d 1847 at the ordination of Henry B. Smith

At Warren Ordination of Rev. Mr. Smith Oct 27<sup>th</sup> 1847

Amherst College 1850

*[Biographical notes on the above individuals ordained or installed:*

*Rev. Asa Mann (1816 – 1885) was ordained in Hardwick, MA, on June 19, 1844; he was pastor of the First Calvinistic Society of Hardwick from 1844 to 1851.*

*Rev. Joseph Vaill (1790 – 1869) was ordained in Brimfield, MA, in 1814, and served as pastor of the Congregational Church there until 1834. He then took a position at Amherst College where he worked until 1845; he was installed as pastor of the Congregational Church in Somers, CT, on August 6, 1845, and served as pastor there until 1854.*

*Rev. Henry B. Smith (1821 – 1883) was ordained at West Granville, MA, on July 22, 1847. He served as pastor of the Second Church of Granville from 1847 to 1851.*

*Rev. Charles Smith (1818 – 1887) was ordained at Warren, MA, on October 12, 1847; he served as pastor of the Warren Congregational Church from 1847 to 1852.*

*Edward Hitchcock was named President of Amherst College in December 1844; his inauguration took place in April 1845; he accepted the additional post of pastor of the College Chapel in May of the same year as mentioned above.]*



## Sermon 541 Installation of Rev. Mr. Crawford in Deerfield

[Crawford Installation, 1858 January,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series C, Box 9: folder 10]

Christian Brethren and friends,

I congratulate you upon the reestablishment among you today of an ordained Gospel Ministry. For this you have so long labored and prayed apparently in vain, that your hearts began to fail you. But how easily has God taken the obstacles out of the way, and brought about the desired consummation with singular unanimity and under most auspicious circumstances. I presume that the secret of this result is, that you ceased to rely upon your own wisdom and strength, and committed the case wholly to God, who, without a miracle, often communicates to his people all the blessings which a miracle could give.

It is true this pulpit has scarcely, if at all, been without an occupant on the sabbath, since your last pastor left you. But how very different is the effect of the truth, delivered, it may be, by one another of us whose weekdays are devoted to the business of literary institutions, or by the passing evangelist, and the same truth delivered by the faithful earnest pastor, who knows how to decide the word of truth, because he knows what his people want.

And now shall I go into details as to what you must do to improve most by this ministry of your choice? I feel confident that you need no such instruction, and that your sincere desire and prayer are, that you may do all in your power to make this ministry the most effective upon yourselves and others.

Men who have made the sacrifices you have to sustain the cause of Christ, have an appreciation of its value and importance of which they have a faint conception, who are connected with a church and society that has gathered into their full fold the wealth and influence of a large flourishing town, and where a connection with them is to be on the popular side, and on the road to worldly importance and honor. Little do such know what a cross he has to take up, where everything is the reverse of this; and where attachment to the cause of Christ will be looked upon as proof of mental weakness, or bigotry, or sectarian zeal; though the man may be admitted to be honest, he must be deficient in knowledge and liberality of feelings. But why should I finish the picture? You know it better than I can paint it, and you know too what sacrifices it has cost you in times past to maintain in this church what you believe the great and essential principles of the Gospel of Christ. You will remember the terrible conflicts in your own bosoms, before you could take up the appalling cross of separating from those whom you esteem and love, and consecrating your all to promote the cause of truth and holiness. Nor have you forgotten the many sharp exigencies through which as a church and society you have been called to pass: when often nothing seemed left to lean upon but faith in God and nothing to hope for but God's interposition. And now shall I fear that those who have been so long on the battlefield, and who have hazarded so much, and suffered so much, and made so many pecuniary sacrifices, shall I fear that they will begin to stagger and grow selfish and cowardly, when they have just invited a new Captain, and one long tried on other battle fields, to lead them on? I will not fear, Brethren; and yet here is your chief danger. The very fact that you have now a leader to carry the standard before you, may produce a feeling that you may remit your own watchfulness and efforts. But how fatal to cherish or to follow such a suggestion! I exhort you to remember, to the man faithful to his duty, there is no satisfying rest this side of heaven. And the harder the struggle now, the sweeter will that final rest be!

Do I ask too much when I urge you to be as faithful, steadfast, and as self-denying, as you have been in years past? I feel confident that in all your hearts there is a strong desire and determination to do more than this. And if you give yourselves up to the full influence of these generous feelings, I feel confident that the Divine blessing will follow your pastor's labours and that I know is the ruling desire of his heart. Oh if by your united prayers and labours God's Spirit should come specially into this community and one and another of your children and friends slain by the law should be restored by grace, how grateful will you be even though involving many sacrifices to have been allowed to act as agents in a work so glorious.

Do you need additional motives to fidelity? Would you could see what I see, and hear what I hear. For memory takes me back to my boyish days, and I see features and hear the voices of many of the fathers and mothers of a past generation, who loved the same great truths of the Gospel which you love, and laboured and prayed for their promotion. How familiar are the countenances of Wright, and Arms, and Hitchcock, and Nims, and Clary, and Hawks, and Childs, and Saxton, and Bardwell. I well remember how one of these sent for me, not less than 40 years ago, as she lay upon the bed of death, and told me she had called me to exhort me with her dying voice to do all I could while I live for Christ. I am but fulfilling this commission today when I repeat to this church the exhortation, *do all you can for Christ*. Oh yes, the truths which you are struggling to maintain, of which Christ is the sum and substance, are worth more than all you can do, and however great the sacrifice you make of ease and reputation and property for this, it will seem small when you come to die: for then the unutterable value of the truths of evangelical religion will fill the soul with amazement. A dying hour is indeed a searching test of the importance of this truth. How often have men discovered and renounced false systems of religion when just ready to enter eternity. But when did the dying man abandon and denounce the doctrines of the evangelical system? Who ever heard a man in his last moments exclaiming; *Oh that I had not believed in the plenary inspiration of the bible: for in this dying power I perceive that much of it is only the language of fallible erring man. I once believed myself by nature entirely depraved and a child of wrath. But now I perceive that I always had a spark of goodness within me, which only needed cultivation. I trembled then in view of my sinfulness, and though myself under a Divine influence, and could find no peace till I had put my trust, as I supposed, in Christ. But these exercises seem now to me to have been a great delusion. Once I thought justification could come only through faith in Christ: but I see now that good works are the best justification and most acceptable to God. I once believed that Christ was an atoning sacrifice and consequently divine in his nature: but how monstrous now such absurdities appear. I thought too that a change of heart, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, was essential and actually supposed myself a subject of it. But the delusion vanishes now, since I perceive that the spirit has no personal existence. I supposed too that all who were not thus renewed would go away into everlasting punishment. But how harsh and repulsive does such a doctrine now seem.*

Who ever heard such a recantation as this? And yet if these doctrines are not true, a dying hour is just the place where we should be most likely to discover their fallacy. But if you cannot persuade a man to give them up while in health, depend upon it he will not let them go when he comes to die. Harsh and repulsive as they seem to many in the heyday of life, they do form a very soft pillow on which a dying man may rest his head. And if you my brethren and friends secure only this boon how light and insignificant all your sacrifices and toils to maintain the truth and your minister who preaches it, appear. But if as I confidently hope and expect this truth shall work its way into the hearts of children and friends around you, and the still small voice of the spirit shall give it vitality, so that one and another shall have a new song put into their mouths, how will your joy in seeing God's glory advanced and souls saved, make you forget all you have done and think only of what God has done. And how delightful the

anticipation of meeting at length in the world of glory, with all, both ministers and people in this place, from its earliest settlement, who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity: nay with all of every name and condition who have loved and maintained the truth and striking with them upon your golden harps, the endless song of redeeming love.

At the installation of a Rev. Mr. Crawford in Deerfield January 13th 1858.

*[Rev. Robert Crawford (1804 - 1896) was ordained on August 20, 1840, in North Adams; he served as pastor of the orthodox church in Deerfield from 1858 to 1882.]*

## Sermon 542 Ordination of Rev. Eastman in Leverett

[Eastman Ordination, 1840 February,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series C, Box 9: folder 11]

Fathers, Brethren, and friends;

I have no hope that I could throw any new light before you in the few moments now allotted to me upon the relations between a minister and his people which are common to all times and circumstances. I pass by these therefore altogether and beg your attention to a single point which at this day has become one of great delicacy and difficulty between ministers and people. Our times are distinguished by the vigorous prosecution of certain plans of benevolence and moral reformation by means of associated action. Unfortunately however there has come to be a good deal of diversity of opinion among conscientious men if not in regard to the objects of these associations yet certainly in respect to the manner of attaining them. The church for instance has long been in the habit of conducting foreign and domestic missions by means of a distinct society. But some professing Christians maintain that this work should be taken entirely into the hands of the church without a separate organization. Some also object to a separate organization for the promotion of temperance; and there is also a division of opinion on the point whether a temperance pledge should be limited to ardent spirits or extended to all intoxicating drinks. Another question which produces diversity of opinion is whether associated action is a proper means of resisting the sin of licentiousness and whether all discussion of the subject does not increased the evil. Another debated question is whether separate societies for the prevention of wars are justified by the word of God. Still greater is the diversity of opinion upon the question whether associations ought to be formed in the free states of this union for the abolition of slavery in the slave states and also whether the colonization of people of colour on the coast of Africa should be encouraged.

Now it is well-known that a diversity of opinion on these subjects has of late occasioned a multitude of dismissals of settled pastors and in still more numerous instances alienation of feeling and diminution of usefulness. If a minister form an opinion on these subjects and act accordingly those of opposite views feel justified in efforts to counteract his usefulness and effect his dismissal. On the other hand if he take no part in the discussions of the day on these points another party among his people are equally offended and attempt to remove him from his place. Whether he act or refuse to act he is sure to be censored – and his usefulness to be obstructed. Is this reasonable? Do people understand what are a minister's rights on these subjects and do they not infringe upon those rights? It is my object at this time to enquire what rights a minister has in this case: and what correspondent rights are possessed by his people. If these are fairly understood the two parties will be less likely to impinge upon each other's rights.

Let it be distinctly understood that I bring forward this subject not because I suppose it to be peculiarly needed in this place. I do not know whether it be needed at all nor do I know the opinion of your pastor on any of the subjects that have been mentioned. But I do know in general this is a most prolific source of trouble in the churches at this day and not having myself a pastoral charge I cannot be charged with being stimulated by personal troubles to give a distorted and prejudiced view of the subject.

Nor would I be thought to regard the subjects that have been specified as matters of small importance. Probably no one of my hearers regards them as more important than I do. But the more important they

are so much the greater need is there that a people should know precisely what are the rights of a minister and what their own rights on the subject.

I think that I may safely presume that all Christians will agree with me that men may entertain different opinions on the subjects that have been specified and yet belong to the same church and society. I know of but few who would regard such a diversity of opinion as a sufficient cause for dividing a church or a religious society. In other words these are points about which men may differ and yet live together in harmony provided they agree in the great fundamental principles of the Gospel. I take it for granted that I may assume this as a truth admitted by all Christians and make it the basis of my reasoning. These points it must be recollected relate chiefly to the mode of benevolent action. I am not prepared to say that the man who refuses in any way to promote the cause of missions or temperance or moral reform or the abolition of slavery or of war can give evidence that he is a Christian. But he may be a Christian and yet not promote these objects in the way that I think best and if he promotes them in any way I maintain that I may still live in unity with him as a Christian brother.

Proceeding on this fundamental principle I mentioned in the first place that a people have a right to know what are the opinions of their minister on the subjects that have been mentioned. They reasonably expect that he should let them know before his settlement what are his views of the Gospel. Why have they not an equal right to know how he views the subjects which are in fact only modes of applying the principles of the Gospel? And this knowledge they are bound to obtain before his settlement that they may act understandingly in that transaction. If they avail not themselves of this right they ought not afterwards to complain if they find their minister's views different from what they expected.

In the second place no minister has the right to introduce these subjects in his preaching as a substitute for the Gospel and consequently people have a right to complain when he does this and actually or impliedly makes them more important than the Gospel. I know that some will contend that they are a part of the Gospel and therefore may no more be neglected than any other part. I admit that they are legitimate inferences from the broad principles of the Gospel and should therefore receive attention. But it is clear that they are not the essence of the Gospel for this consists in the way of salvation for sinners through the blood of Jesus Christ and for nearly 2000 years was that Gospel preached and souls were saved by it while yet no distinct society for missions or for temperance or peace or the abolition of slavery existed. And a man may now become a new creature in Christ Jesus – that is he may embrace the Gospel without belonging to any of these societies and on the other hand he may be a zealous member of these while unconverted. Now the original grand object of the Gospel ministry is to treat man to become reconciled to God. And this point every minister is bound to keep in view and not to suffer any particular applications of the principles of the bible to eclipse it. His people have a right to expect of him that his great effort should be to save their souls and not to make them missionary or temperance agents or abolitionists or colonizationists.

In the third place a minister has a right to form his own opinion as to the best mode and to what extent the movements of benevolence and moral ought to be carried on. This right belongs to all men: and emphatically to the minister: for he is obliged to act on these subjects and to take the lead in them. It is not only his right therefore to adopt such opinions respecting them as he thinks most according to the Divine Will but he is solemnly bound to do it. And if he professes to have no opinion on these points he will bring upon himself more obloquy and obstruct his usefulness more than if he have a decided opinion.

In the fourth place a minister has a right to advocate his own views on these subjects among his people and to patronize others in promoting them just so far as he thinks expedient and duty: except that he may not as I have already stated substitute them for the Gospel. People must leave their ministers to decide this matter himself. Some complain that their pastor does so little others that he does so much on these subjects. But people ought surely to have confidence in their minister to leave him to judge in what manner and proportion the different parts of religious and moral truth shall be presented. It is no reason why a minister should be silent on any subject that the opinions of some of his people are opposed to his own. For it is the very object of his labours to convince those who have adopted errors that they are wrong: and so long as he confines himself to fair argument and persuasion no man ought to complain. If a minister were to preach nothing except what fell in with the notions of all the hearers he would do them little good. Impenitent man do not complain when he urges them to change their opinions and their conduct. Why should anyone find fault when he tries with equal sincerity and fairness to convince them that they should sustain missionary operations or sign a temperance pledge or join a Peace Society or become an abolitionist or a colonizationist? If he does not convince them on any of these points they have a perfect right to resist his persuasion. Or on the other hand if any think their minister too remiss in urging the claims of any of these objects they have a right to act themselves but not to complain of him since he is doing just what he feels bound by a sense of duty to do. In short both minister and people have a right to advocate and promote their own views on the subject as far as they can consistent with other duties. But they have no right to injure one another's feelings or on account of a difference of views have to disturb their cordial and kind feeling, that ought ever to exist between the minister and his people.

Finally a minister has a right to the control of his own pulpit – to admit or refuse to admit such persons as he judges proper to address his people. It is understood in this country generally that when a minister introduces anyone to address his people unless he state expressly to the contrary that he approves of that individual in the main and of his object. Now if he must introduce to his pulpit or if he refuse to introduce every one who asks the liberty he must often seem to his people to approve or condemn what he in fact does not. Hence this matter must be left entirely to his unbiased judgment people and if a people have not confidence enough in the minister to be willing to leave his pulpit in his own hands they had better never have invited him to become their preacher. They may think that he acts injudiciously introducing or refusing to introduce this or that man to address them: but they ought not to complain of him for exercising his undoubted right since they are not obliged to hear the individuals that are thus recommended to them. The man opposed to mission would be glad never to have his conscience roused by a missionary agent and so he finds fault with this minister for opening his pulpit to such a man. He who uses or vends intoxicating drinks complains because he is invited to hear a listener on temperance. The military man finds fault if a peace agent is allowed to address him. Another man blames his minister because the seventh commandment is pressed upon his notice. The man indifferent to slavery or in favour of it complains because an abolitionist is allowed to lecture and the abolitionist is equally irritated with his minister if he yields his pulpit to a colonizationist. But all these men are wrong in blaming their minister for allowing any or all these agents the use of his pulpit or in refusing it to them all. For he is only exercising an undoubted right of which no one can deprive him.

But I must not dwell longer on the subject. I think I have now stated the most important rights respecting them both of the minister and the people: and I feel confident that these rights have not been well understood in the community and that ministers especially have had their rights infringed upon and as a consequence have been driven away without reason from important fields of usefulness. May I not hope that the development which I have made which must certainly commend itself to the Christian feelings of this audience will tend to prevent any such termination of the relation that has the

state been established here.

But after all my hearers there is another means still more efficacious for giving permanency and success to the labours of your minister. I have said that his grand object should be by preaching the Gospel to save your souls. Now if you cordially unite with him in this object by your prayers by your habitual attendance upon the sabbath and week day means of grace and all other methods in your power you will move on harmoniously and happily together and find neither time nor inclination for jealousies surmises and divisions. Let your hearts and your hands always be so full of this object that Satan cannot crowd in any other. And truly could this people but half realize what it is to lose the soul and how imminent is the danger of all the unconverted and on the other hand how it fills heaven with joy when a soul is rescued from the power of sin. Oh who among them would suffer any minor interest to interfere with this one grand object which so immeasurably outstrips in importance every other! The high and holy purpose of your minister I doubt not after the example of Paul is that by warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Such an object is enough to satisfy an angel's highest wish and enough also to fill in angel's hands. Come up therefore beloved around your minister and hold up his hands and devote yourselves to his work \* nor let your efforts cease till your children and neighbors – all – all who have immortal souls are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Then with what exalting joy will you go up from this vale of tears and together be welcomed to the joys of your Lord.

\* How wonderfully has God blessed you by enabling you to erect this convenient and beautiful house of worship and now by sending your pastor – Oh there is one other gift which I trust he is ready to grant in which I trust you will continue to ask and labour for with increasing earnestness until it comes. I mean the gift of the Holy Spirit – Oh let not your prayers and efforts be relaxed till your children etc.

At Mr. Eastman's Ordination – Leverett

February 1840

*[Rev. David Eastman (1806 – 1896) was ordained at Leverett, MA, on February 12, 1840; he served as pastor of the Leverett Congregational Church from 1840 to 1859.]*

## Sermon 543 Ordination of Rev. Harris in Conway

[Harris Ordination, 1841 December,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series C, Box 9: folder 12]

*[See Hitchcock's comments on his own failings and unfaithfulness to the church.]*

Christians Brethren and Friends,

I congratulate you upon the speedy reestablishment of the Christian ministry among you. It is an early answer to your prayers. God has not seen fit to try your faith as he often does by delay. It is a token that he is ready to bestow the grace necessary to make that ministry effectual if you seek it with a proper spirit. This then is the great point at which you should aim: so to feel in conduct towards God and towards your minister and towards one another, that you may realize the full measure of blessings which result from an able and faithful ministry wisely improved. Towards God then should be manifested a spirit of dependence and humble prayer – towards one another a spirit of forbearance and brotherly love. Shall I proceed to point out your duties toward your minister? My past experience among you testifies that those duties are well understood by you. Yet I will frankly declare to you what I have told your minister he may expect from you: nay, relying on my own experience I have not hesitated to promise him several things of importance. I took for granted what I still believe to be true that he comes among you with a sincere desire and purpose to do all he can to promote your eternal interest. In this work I have told him he might depend upon your steady and firm cooperation: that you will not by a stinted pecuniary support leave him to use one hand to obtain the meat that perishes while with the other he deals out a scanty pittance of the bread of eternal life. I have told him that your sympathies and prayers will go along with him in all his toils and labours, and hold up his hands: that so long as he preaches the truth faithfully, he will not find you complaining or fastidious. I have told him that while he will find you cautious and slow in your movements and affections, they will be enduring and strong. He has been assured that you will not demand of him an excess of labour that you are fully aware that the duties of a pastor here must be labourious from the fact that this people are scattered over so wide a surface: and that therefore you will not require him so much of extra service as to break down a constitution not the most robust. I have told him that he need not fear too many private and social calls from his people; nay, that he will probably receive much fewer than he will wish. But think of me not rude, if I suggest to you if such calls are not short, they will frequently force the minister to devote those hours to preparation for the pulpit which nature demands for sleep. I have told him - but I am almost afraid to say what farther I have told him - lest I should awaken spiritual pride - yet that you may know what he will expect. I will say, that I have told him he may hope to find here no small amount of devoted piety - piety that is not satisfied with the forms of religion but breathes forth its pure and self-denying spirit - that is willing to pray and labour and make sacrifices for Christ - piety that can meet the trials of life with holy resignation and change the agonies of death into joys of triumph. And my brethren, if in every other point I have misrepresented you let me not prove a false prophet here. (\* See over the leaf.)

I rejoice in the happy auspices under which my respected young friend commences his labours among you. Knowing his character well, and also yours, I cannot but but anticipate those high and holy results which a faithful ministry brings in its train. It is a favorable moment that so much unanimity has prevailed in the transactions consummated on this day's solemnities. It is favorable that a new and beautiful house of God will soon be ready to welcome its worshipers: and especially is it favorable that



such a spirit of concession prevailed in its location: for it shows the triumph of Christian principles over strong personal preferences and prejudices. In short may we not hope that these various blessings God has bestowed upon you will prove only an earnest of gifts still more valuable. Why should we not hope that they will follow speedily? Some of us can recollect that by the ordination services which took place in this house twenty years ago one individual was awakened from the slumbers of sin and a revival followed soon after. Why should not faith anticipate a similar blessing on this occasion? Why should not some of these youth before me come to the conclusion that they have lived long enough without God and without hope in the world and that this very day is a most favorable time for beginning a life of holiness? Why should not some of those in the midst of life remember that their sun may go down while it is yet day and therefore begin this very hour to prepare for the night of death and a solemn judgment from which there is no escape? And why should not those whose heads are already whitening for the harvest of death be made to feel that the last call to repentance may now be sounding in their ears? (See last page)

\*And now fathers and mothers young men and maidens connected with the society have I promised your minister too much? Will he come to me hereafter with a sinking heart, and say, *You deceived me: you have given me too favorable an opinion of this people. I am labouring in vain and spending my strength for naught. I am sinking under my labours for the want of that sympathy and cooperation which you, as a voluntary sponsor of this church, promised.* My brethren, I will not believe that such a complaint will ever reach my ears. I will not believe that this church and society are so changed from what they were during my sojourn among them.

Allow me in conclusion to say that the solemnities of this occasion awaken in some of our minds a multitude of most solemn and stirring recollections and associations. The fathers and mothers who were present at an ordination service twenty years ago where are they? Now and then as I look around I recognize one whom my eye rested then and from sabbath to sabbath with pleasure. But most of them are gone and how deeply have these few intervening years ploughed their furrows and sprinkled their frosts upon the heads of those that remain. And the children have crowded forward to fill their parents' places: so that even within the lapse of so few years the larger part of this congregation appears like strangers except that in many bright and joyous countenances I recognize the features of well-remembered parents. But the lesson is a salutary one. Never do I feel so deeply impressed with the mutability of society as when I stand up to address this audience. For if in any place we may look for permanency it is in a society constituted like yours. If they change be so striking even here still more striking would it be could we watch the revolution of society at large.

But though the retrospect of life's changes be often sad we ought not to suffer it to induce such despondency as to unnerve our energies and leave us to sink down into inaction: but rather ought we to strive to learn such lessons from the vicissitudes of life as will stimulate us to more vigorous efforts. In the circumstances in which we are now placed such lessons come crowding upon us in great numbers and power. As one of those who formerly stood here as an accredited pastor of this church, I feel that these solemnities are full of admonition. It is impossible that I should not be reminded today of the scenes of my ministry here: and how am I taught the importance of improving every opportunity of doing and getting good while it is present. However great my deficiencies in duty as a minister were how vain the wish to bring back the departed years and more faithfully to perform over my duties again.

Alas their record on high can never be erased. I must make the dread account just as the faithful pen of iron and the point of a diamond have written it down (And amid the many delightful recollections which the retrospect of my short ministry affords I can confess that a sense of unfaithfulness and deficiency in

duty outweighs all other considerations and prevents my ever looking forward to the final reckoning but with solemn trembling. For how overwhelming the thought that I may meet some soul there who will charge his eternal ruin to my unfaithfulness.) But I must not enlarge. Rather let the thought arouse me for the time to come to do with my might what my hands find to do, while the golden opportunity is within my reach.

It is impossible in such an hour as this that the memory of the many holy brethren and sisters of this church for the last 20 or 30 years have gone from this place into eternity should not bring them around us as a cloud of witnesses. The venerable man who first and by far the longest of any minister broke to this people the bread of life cannot but stand the most vivid in our recollection. But let me testify to the rising generation that a large proportion of those Christians who grew up under his ministry were eminent for their holiness. Many of them have I accompanied to the banks of Jordan and seen them plunge without fear into the dark currents and heard the song of triumph as their emancipated spirits entered into the celestial city. Sweet is the recollection of the last days of such Christians as Maynard, Avery, Billings, Ware, Ellis, Parsons, Look, Goodale and Fisher. Oh let the younger members of this church realize that they have taken the places of no ordinary Christians and in order to fill those places their standard of piety must be very high. God grant that the mantles of these departed Elijahs may never want Elishas on which to fall.

Finally let this people be admonished by the occasion that if they would improve by the labours of those ministers God sends them they must seize the earliest moment. Judging from the long period of their first pastor's ministry they might indeed calculate long to enjoy the labours of our newly placed over them. But the subsequent history of ministerial labour here teaches a different lesson. Strongly indeed do I desire and finally wish that the union consummated today may be as lasting as the lives of those who form it. But the part of wisdom is to improve it as if some special providence would soon sever the relation. Then might we hope that soon that agonizing spirit of prayer would be found in this church which brings down upon a people converting grace. Then with the solemn enquiry soon be heard what shall we do to be saved: and ere long parents will be heard rejoicing over converted children husbands over converted wives and wives over converted husbands, brothers and sisters over converted brothers and sisters, and companions over companions

Nor will the joy be confined to this world but a song of exultation and holy triumph shall be heard in heaven over souls converted and honour gained to Divine grace. Nay, those same joyous notes sounded by the harps of angels and redeemed men shall roll along through all the periods of eternity. Oh Christian Brethren does not the anticipation of such results even now awaken within you those holy desires which God delights to gratify! Begin then this very day that preparation of heart which must precede such a glorious consummation and as God is true He will not fail to bring it about. Then indeed shall every anniversary of this occasion be hailed by many a soul as commemorating the birth day of its immortal glory.

Delivered at the Ordination of Rev. Mr. Harris in Conway December 22<sup>d</sup> 1841

*[Rev. Samuel Harris (1814 – 1899) was ordained at Conway, MA, on December 22, 1841. He served as pastor in Conway from 1841 to 1851. Subsequently he served as pastor of a church in Pittsfield, MA, President of Bowdoin College, and on the faculty at Yale.]*

## Sermon 544 Various Ordinations

[Various Ordinations and Installations, 1843-1860,  
EOH, Series 3, Sub-series C, Box 9: folder 12]

*[This sermon includes a number of fragments and inserts. Pastors who were ordained include Henry Seymour, Alfred E. Ives, George M. Adams, Richard S. Billings, Hiram Meads, William S. Tyler, John W. Underhill, and John W. Lane from 1843 – 1860.]*

My beloved Christian Brothers,

In executing the duties assigned me which ecclesiastical usage has denominated The Charge it would be obviously useless and even impossible to go into a detailed description of all the duties devolving upon a minister of the Gospel. But I may perhaps call your attention to a few leading principles which will be of service as a guide (And here let me presume that the most consistent and successful minister is usually he whose mind is most thoroughly familiar with the general principles of duty and whose conduct is governed by them rather than by expediency or circumstances.)

In entering upon important worldly enterprises men almost universally pause to enquire what is the precise object they have in view and having determined this they next enquire what are the means most likely to attain it. Precisely such a course should the minister of the Gospel adopt. What then is the precise object at which he should aim when ordained (to preach to a particular church and people)? Nothing less I maintain than the eternal salvation of everyone of his hearers. Does this seem a mere visionary object since all past experience teaches us that it will never be fully attained? But the aim of the minister is one thing and the results of his efforts quite another. Paul may plant and Apollos water but it is God who gives the increase. If God does not see fit to save the whole of the people that is no reason why the minister should not strive and labour for the conversion of all. Do you enquire what is the use of aiming at the salvation of those whom God has not proposed to save? What has God's secret purpose to do with your duty? How do I know what that purpose is till it be developed - that is till the Judgment Day arrives? Before that period can you say who the individuals in the congregation are whom God has not determined to save? How do you know but he means to save them all? You do know that he is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth and that is your rule of duty. So thought Paul and his fellow labourers. Whom we preach, *warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily*. What a noble purpose was this! Worthy indeed of an apostle. It was not merely the salvation of every man that came within the reach of his influence but their perfection. And it was not the people of one place but the world was Paul's parish. Certainly then every successor of Paul whether settled over a particular church or not should form the same lofty purpose.

The second enquiry is by what means shall this purpose be carried into effect? Here too the example of Paul will greatly assist us.

The first important means is the faithful preaching of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. I say the peculiar doctrines. For though the principles of natural religion be important in this place they are not alone sufficient to salvation. And the minister should ever bear in mind that there is only one Gospel that can save men. For says Paul, *Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you*

*than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed.* And it is easy to see what Paul thought to be the essence of that true Gospel. He takes it for granted - as a fact established by all experience that all men are dead in trespasses and sins and by nature children of wrath and then he holds up the cross as the grand remedy as the great centre of the Christian system around which all of the truths circulate in harmony. *The love of Christ constraineth us, says he, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again - Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. I delivered unto you first of all, says he in another place, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* Here is the essence of the Gospel: these the great truths which are *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* (It is not strange that Paul pressed these truths so earnestly and constantly that the Corinthians thought him beside himself. But such insanity as this will always be very becoming in the minister of Christ and all men when they come to die will look upon it as a most sober reason.)

But though the essence of Christianity be thus simple in its outlines yet for the full elucidation of its principles it needs the sagacious application of the most profound and acute knowledge. And the minister will find all science and all literature auxiliary to his great work. The more extensive his acquirements the more fully and effectively can he unfold the Christian system. Let him therefore become as thoroughly conversant as possible with all science and all literature except that which is fictitious.

In the second place the accomplishment of the ministers grand object requires pastoral visitation and faithful personal conversation.

When the gospel flourished most in primitive times we are told that the apostle *daily in the temple and in every house ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ:* and Paul said to the Ephesian elders, *I have taught you publicly and from house to house.* Men will evade the best directed arrows of truth from the pulpit; but it is difficult for any man to remain unaffected by a personal appeal which he knows proceeds from a benevolent motive. And for the minister to convince those whom he addresses that a desire for their best good does prompt his efforts is to open an effectual door fully entrance of the truth to their hearts. He must not give over his efforts though the first the second and the third appeal produce no apparent effect. For the fourth affectionate entreaty may prevail. (I have heard of the individual who remain totally unmoved by the repeated appeals of the minister until the latter despairing of success gave over the effort and as was natural for a disappointed man drew an audible sigh. That sigh went to the sinners heart because it convinced him of the sincerity of his advisor and he was roused from his dream of spiritual death. Some pastors neglect a repetition of personal appeals lest it should give offense. But if his heart do deeply feel for and individual he need not fear that such repetition will disgust those whom he would win, for true Christian love is almost omnipotent over the human heart. The wild savage is subdued by it and a reasonable man in enlightened Christian lands will find it hard to resist it.

When I consider the almost certain success which has ever attended faithful pastoral visitation I cannot but feel that it is too apt to be underrated at the present day. While the importance of a high standard of scholarship and eloquent oratory is urged upon the youthful minister from a thousand voices how few exhortations meet him on the subject of pastoral faithfulness. Beaten oil is indeed most important

to keep the lamp of truth burning brightly in the house of God and the minister ought always remember that it is better to write so as to make a critic turn Christian than to write so as to make a Christian turn critic. Still it is better to be wanting in some of the flowers and polish of composition and delivery than in thorough pastoral visitation and personal appeals. The latter is essential to success the former is not. He who depends almost entirely upon his public performances must calculate upon a barren ministry.

The third thing essential to the accomplishment of the ministers object is earnest and persevering prayers.

If the minister do not feel the necessity of a divine influence to give efficacy to his labours prayer it seems to me must be a mere solemn mockery. But the minister of Paul's stamp does feel that all his help and success must come from God and that he only can give the increase. And therefore he prays: and the more abundant he is in labours, the more importunate he is in prayers. Prayers and efforts seem to some to neutralize each other. But the secret of true religion is to bring them into harmony. Never was there a more beautiful example of disharmony than the history of Paul. When we see how full his hands were of labour and his mind with plans we imagine he believed that the world could be corrected by effort alone and that he had no time for prayer. But when we read of the fervency and frequency of his prayers we are ready to imagine that he placed no dependence upon means. And it is indeed true that when he laboured he laboured as if the whole of his success depended on those labours. And when he prayed he prayed as if it all depended upon his prayers. What a noble example of every youthful minister to follow! In his ardent love of the truth he may indeed for a time almost believe that this alone faithfully presented must subdue the human heart. So thought Philip Melancthon. But when he found that in spite of his logic and his eloquence men slumbered on in sin he cried, *old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon*. But far different was the fruit of Paul's union of labour with prayer. And so shall everyone find out who treads the apostle's footsteps.

Finally, I hardly need to add that holiness of life is essential to the success of a minister. It is not enough that he point the road to heaven: he must also lead the way. He must not expect that his church will be in advance of him in practical religion. If they are so when he comes among them he must either rise at once to their standard or he will soon drag them down to his. But on the subject I need not enlarge: for men of every creed no creed are agreed in making personal holiness an essential element of ministerial character. The world is never so eagle eyed as when it is hunting for some moral stain upon the ministerial escutcheon.

My charge to you then my Christian brethren can be condensed into a few words. Take the high and holy resolution of Paul to present everyone of your people perfect in Christ as the great controlling principle of your labours. Then in order to carry it into execution preach the same Gospel as he preached so that at the close of your labours here you may be all able to say with him I take you to record that I am free from the blood of all men: for I am not shunned to declare unto you the whole council of God. Preach this Gospel like him not only publicly but from house to house so that as his people go one after another into eternity their consciences shall testify to your private faithfulness to their souls. And finally baptize all your efforts daily in fervent prayer and let your life be a pattern of that holiness which you urge upon others. Thus labouring and living I predict success for your ministry: for these of these only are the means which God has blessed in all past ages.

You have entered an interesting field of labour one to be full of hallowed associations. Voices fall on my ear today and forms flit before my eyes which your ears never heard in your eyes never saw. The voices

and forms of the holy men and women who once trod these streets and prayed in these dwellings who loved those great truths which Paul loved which we now profess to love - whose lives shined forth their power to sanctify and whose deaths exhibited their power to sustain the soul in its final hour.

*[The following sentence near the end of the document and marked by an asterisk, may have been added for a Deerfield audience.]*

\* Oh yes as they pass along I recognize the features of Wright and Ames and Hitchcock and Nims and Clary and Hawks and Childs and Saxton and Bardwell and many others and I seem to hear their earnest prayers for this place as they were wont to fall upon my youthful ears.

Oh what a deep interest with these these departed saints take in the solemn rights of this day could they be present? Could they be present, I say? Are they not present? Do they not come around us as a cloud of witnesses to welcome you to your labours and to bid you God speed by their approving smiles? And there are witnesses of more exalted character who are looking on today and will follow you in all your future labours. You are made a spectacle not to men only but to angels nay to the omniscient God the Father Son and Spirit. Act well your part on this theater and we may fondly hope that the time is not distant when the moral aspect of this lovely valley (where your lot is cast) shall be as enchanting as it is natural beauties.

Delivered at the ordination of Mr. Seymour in Deerfield March 1<sup>st</sup> 1843.

Also in the same place at the installation of Rev. Alfred E. Ives September 5<sup>th</sup> 1849

*[The following list is attached to the front cover.]*

Declared at the ordination of Mr. \_\_\_\_ in Deerfield - Mr. Adams in Conway and Mr. Billings in Shelburne

September 29<sup>th</sup> 1858 at the ordination of Mr. Mead in South Hadley

October 5<sup>th</sup> 1859 at the ordination of Professor William S. Tyler and Mr. Underhill in North Amherst.

October 17<sup>th</sup> 1860 at the ordination of Rev. Mr. Lane in Whately

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*[A number of pages have been appended containing material likely added or modified for particular occasions.]*

And here, allow me, my younger brothers who have just been ordained over this church to make a suggestion and to make it in their hearing. I did not charge you but I recommend you both as a means of preserving health finding more time for pastoral labors and as I believe of doing more good to make more of your public proclamations of the Gospel extemporaneous or rather perhaps unwritten than is common in our denomination. I do not mean that you should preach without thoroughly studying your subject and getting deeply imbued with the spirit: but try to get in the habit of being extemporaneous as

to language. Yea, I could have you aim to make a part of your pulpit services on the sabbath of this character. I know that your feelings as a scholar will revolt at such a recommendation. But I do not believe that you or scarcely any other young man can prepare two such sermons each week as the rules of the schools and the public taste demand and be able to perform other important duties and preserve health. And when you do write I would have you aim at following these rules and gratifying the literary as well as religious taste of your hearers. But if you can so mortify your literary fastidiousness and ambition as if he is willing to trust yourself sometimes in the pulpit without full notes and forget in a measure everything but the salvation of souls I fancy that your hearers also will often forget everything else. But perhaps I ought to add with Paul, *I speak this by permission and not by commandment*. And yet I wish I could speak it in the ears of all the youthful pastors in the land.

It gratifies me to find one whom I have known so long and so well as yourself my young brother entering a field of labour so interesting where the Gospel has been faithfully and ably preached by those who have gone before you and where the truth has taken deep roots and borne abundant fruit. From the hour when in infancy I impressed on your forehead the seal of baptism I have been cognizant of your course to this hour. I well remember when the Lord took away your beloved twin brother and laid him by the side of my own sweet boy then my only child and I felt you might have been spared for some important service. This conviction gathered strength when God touched and moulded your heart by his grace. Since then I have seen you steadily laying the foundations and erecting the superstructures of a thorough education - a work whose difficulty and arduousness few can appreciate. But now if I do not misjudge we begin to see the developments of Divine Providence concerning you. You enter today the appointed field of labour where the ripened harvest waves before you. Grasp the sickle with a courageous and a hopeful heart and as you thrust it among the ready grain remember what a multitude of witnesses not merely your fellow men but inhabitants of heaven are looking on and cheering you in your work. Act well your part on this theatre and the beauties of nature that greet us on every side in this land of hills and valleys will prove an emblem of those brighter spiritual glories that shall follow the Gospel faithfully preached among this people .

The field of labour which you have entered is one to me full of hallowed associations. Here the first half of my life has been spent: and who that has passed more than a quarter century in a spot for which nature has done so much can ever feel indifferent to its welfare! For as I look over the audience how few faces do I see of who those were my early companions and fellow townsmen. Yet voices etc.

*[The following sentence, marked by an asterisk, has been crossed out in pencil.]*

That I should live to be present at this induction to office on the second ambassador of Christ to the church seems more like a dream than reality.

You enter a deeply interesting field of labour which has the marked peculiarity of embracing the numerous members of a literary institution whose influence on the world is scarcely second to none in our land. It will be your privilege to exert influences on minds that will hereafter be scattered as leaven in all quarters of the globe to arouse and transform the torpid mass of ignorance and sin. Whatever is valuable in your instruction will be repeated over and over again it may be in foreign lands as well as in our own. In many of these youthful hearts also as well as in those of this church you will find a sincerity



and a depth of spiritual experience and a consequent power in prayer on which you may constantly rely in seasons of religious declension or any other exigency.

See then my beloved brother what a ripe and precious harvest in this place awaits the reaper's hand. Grasp the sickle with a courageous and hopeful heart and as you thrust it among the golden grain remember what a multitude of witnesses not merely of our fellow man but inhabitants of heaven are looking on and sharing cheering your onward in your work. Atwell in the arena and the beauties of nature and vision here will be an emblem of those brighter spiritual glories that shall follow the Gospel faithfully preached away among his people this people.

\*We rejoice that the interesting field of labour which you enter is so near the literary institution with which some of us are connected with which you were formerly connected as a pupil and more recently as an instructor. Your fidelity and success there gives us reason to expect the like fidelity and success here.

*[Biographical information on the individuals ordained:]*

*Henry Seymour (1816-1894) was ordained on March 1, 1843; he was pastor of the Orthodox Church in Deerfield from 1843 to 1849. (From Sheldon, vol. 2)*

*Alfred E. Ives (1809-1892) was ordained on September 5, 1849 in Deerfield; he was pastor of the Orthodox Church in Deerfield from 1849 to 1855. (From Sheldon, vol. 2)*

*Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ in Deerfield [Hitchcock may have been referring to Seymour or Ives]*

*George Moulton Adams (1824 - 1906) was ordained in Conway, MA, in 1851; he was pastor of the Congregational Church in Conway from 1851 to 1863; he was subsequently pastor of churches in Portsmouth, NH, and Holliston, MA. (Pease; NE Hist & Gen Reg)*

*Richard S. Billings (1820 – 1888) was ordained on May 26, 1855, in Shelburne, MA; he was pastor of the First Church in Shelburne from 1855 to 1870. (various sources) He was born in Conway and he had a twin brother, William Storrs Billings, who may have died August 21, 1824 (see Mass. Death Records). Hitchcock was related to Richard S. Billings by marriage: Edward's sister, Amelia, married Henry P. Billings; Henry and Richard were distant cousins.*

*Hiram Mead (1827 - 1881) was ordained on September 29, 1858, in South Hadley; he was pastor of the Congregational Church in South Hadley from 1858 to 1867 and subsequently pastor of churches in Nashua, NH, and Oberlin, OH. He married Elizabeth Storrs Billings, sister of Richard S. Billings.*

*William S. Tyler (1810 - 1897) was ordained October 5, 1859 in North Amherst, MA; he was classics professor at Amherst College from 1836 to 1893. (AC)*

*John W. Underhill (1829 - 1862) was ordained in North Amherst, MA, on October 5, 1859; he was pastor of the North Amherst Congregational Church from 1859 to 1862. (AC Biog Record)*

*John W. Lane (1827 - 1911) was ordained in Whately, MA, October 17, 1860; he was pastor of the First*

*Parish (Congregational Church) in Whately from 1860 to 1878, then at Hadley, MA, from 1878 to 1911.  
(Granite Monthly)]*

## Sermon 548 The Fully Ripe Grain Gathered In

[E. Hitchcock, *The Fully Ripe Grain Gathered In*  
(Charles A. Mirick, Greenfield, Mass. 1856)]

Transcribed from the printed edition  
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call number QE22.H67 F8 1856

### THE FULLY RIPE GRAIN GATHERED IN.

A

SERMON:

AT THE FUNERAL

OF

REV. THEOPHILUS PACKARD, D. D.,

PREACHED AT SHELBURNE,

September 19, 1855.

BY EDWARD HITCHCOCK,

*Late President of Amherst College.*

GREENFIELD:

PRINTED BY CHARLES A. MIRICK.

1856.

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Though conscious of great defects in the following sermon, I feel bound to yield it for publication to the wishes of the surviving relatives of Dr. Packard.

E. H.

Amherst College, Sept. 1856

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## SERMON.

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*Job, 5: 26. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.*

Such an end as this, Eliphaz, one of the comforters of Job, declared should come upon him, if he committed himself unreservedly to God. In the course of his conversation we all know that Eliphaz and all Job's friends said some things which were not agreeable to the will of God: and the sentiment contained in the text, although true as a general principle of the divine administration, yet admits of many exceptions: since some most eminent and devoted saints have been called in the morning, or the meridian of life, into eternity. The text, however, contains a striking illustration of the final departure of a servant of the Lord, who had grown gray in fighting the battles of faith, and finished his course with joy. In pursuing the subject I shall consider,

*First, The implantation of holiness in the heart.*

*Secondly, Its growth.*

*And thirdly, The harvest.*

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First, its implantation. The fine parable of the sower, as uttered by our Saviour, here occurs to mind. *A sower went out to sow his seed, by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell upon thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up and bore fruit an hundred fold. Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God: Those by the wayside, are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they which when they hear receive the word with joy: and these have no root which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard go forth are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with*

*patience*. The truths of God's word, then, are the seed that is sown in the human heart in order to produce therein the plants and the fruits of holiness. But why is it that one heart, into which this seed falls, is good and honest, and that of another rocky or choked with thorn? It is not because men's hearts naturally differ from one another: for the bible expressly declares that God *fashioneth their hearts alike*. But that same bible also declares that *the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord*. We find it also promised concerning Israel in the days following the Messiah: *After those days, saith...*

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*...the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts*. The Holy Spirit also testifies that *Paul may plant, and Apollo water, but God giveth the increase*. In short, from every part of scripture we learn that the reason the seed of God's word is made effectual in the hearts of any, is, that the Spirit of God renders it so. The soil, by nature, is bad in all: but where the grace of God operates, it moulds that soil into a fertile spot, and spreads through its genial warmth and roots out the tares, or prevents them from springing up: and thus fit the spot for receiving the incorruptible seed of God's word, and entering it to shoot forth into a beautiful plant, sending its root deep downwards, and shooting its branches wide upwards to bear abundant fruit.

And in order that a man may *come to his grave in a full age, like a shock of corn fully ripe*, it is important that this holy principle be implanted early in life. No doubt many, who live unconverted till the meridian of their days, with nothing but tares flourishing in their hearts in rank luxuriance, become by the special abundant grace of God, prepared for Heaven ere they die. But after all, when they look back upon life, they will see it most clearly, and feel it most deeply, that they have produced much less fruit to the glory of God, than those who early embraced a Saviour, and their holiness has not sent its roots so deep, nor its branches so high, nor acquired such firmness to resist the rocking tempest, as that of him who remembered his Creator in the days of his youth. The seed which the husbandman casts into the ground in midsummer, may spring up and flourish rapidly, yet its growth is too much hurried to permit us to calculate upon the solidity of parts, or that...

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...excellence and abundance of the grain, which he sees in those plants that were sown in the spring time, and have more slowly, yet more surely advanced toward perfection. The husbandman who suffers tares and weeds to grow unmolested among his grain, till they have acquired full strength, will certainly find it more difficult to subdue them than if he watched their first appearance, and applied faithfully the hoe and the plough: and the probability is that he will not be able wholly to subdue them after permitting them to gain so firm a footing. And the same is true of the man whose heart remains uncultivated till the morning of his days is gone by. His energies have been in a great measure exhausted by feeding his evil habits, and now that they are wanted to nourish the holy germ that would expand in his heart, and rise

into strength and beauty, they can afford but a scanty supply. In order that religion should exhibit itself in its most perfect and harmonious form in man, it must grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength. In order that his old age may bend with its clustered fruit, the seed must be cast into the soil in the spring time of life.

But I trespass upon the second head of the subject, where *I proposed to consider the growth of religion in man.*

We have seen how it is that the seed is made to germinate in a spot so barren and sterile as the heart of man is by nature. It is not by any inherent warmth which that soil possesses, nor by any other life-giving quality found in it. The seed might lie buried there forever, did not the showers of divine grace copiously descend, and the warm rays of the Sun of Righteous-

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-ness shine upon it. And those showers, and those rays are equally necessary to nourish the tender plant, and make it advance to strength and beauty and fruitfulness. Unless the showers of Heaven water it, unless the breath of Heaven blow upon it, soon would it wither away and die; or the frosts of selfishness would nip the opening bud, and destroy the expanding flower, and disappoint the hope of harvest. Christians are *sanctified, says the apostle, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God, and it is by beholding as in a glass the glory of the Son Jesus Christ*, that they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Yet it is not hence to be inferred that cultivation is unnecessary. As well might the husbandman conclude because his grain would not mature and bear fruit without the genial influence of summer suns and reviving showers, that, therefore, he might neglect to cultivate the plants in expectation that they could not be thereby affected. But he would find, however clear his reasoning on the subject might seem to his purblind intellect, that if the hoe and the cultivator were not applied, the weeds and the tares would root out his grain and his anticipated harvest would fail. No less certainly will the man, who fancies himself a christian, fail of growing in grace, and of reaping a final and eternal reward, who neglects a vigorous cultivation of his christian affections and graces. These cannot be matured at once any more than the plants of the earth. Plants may thrive faster in a green-house than in the open atmosphere; and so may the christian, surrounded by everything favorable to his growth in divine knowledge, make a more rapid advancement than he who has to contend with a...

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...thousand obstructions. But under the most favorable circumstances his increasing holiness is gradual, not paroxysmal.

Regeneration, indeed, is an instantaneous work; since there cannot be a moment in which a man is neither an enemy nor a friend of God – neither prepared for Heaven nor hell. But sanctification is a progressive work, a work of the whole life, subsequent to regeneration. When a man once puts his hand to the plough, he is never more to look back; he must not look back; he cannot look back, in the scripture sense of the term, and be fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a most fatal delusion that the young and the ignorant sometimes imbibe, that to obtain heaven is the work of a day, or a month, or a year. What if the husbandman, the moment he saw the seed he had sown beginning to shoot up, were to give over all further anxiety, and labor, and feel certain of the harvest! No less dangerous is it for him, who imagines he sees the seed of God's word springing up in his heart, to give himself no further trouble on the subject, but settle down with the soothing quietus that the work is God's, and there is no danger but he will carry it on. But are you sure it is the work of God? Are you sure the plants of holiness have begun to grow in your heart? The truth is; if you are disposed to neglect their cultivation on this ground, they are nothing but tares, which resemble grain. You have mistaken their nature, but by their fruits you will ultimately know them.

The husbandman does not think his field of grain safe a moment, until it is surrounded by a well built fence. Alike necessary is it for the Christian to guard the field of his heart by prudence, correct principles...

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...and faith. Paul exhorts such to take to themselves the whole armor of God that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. He represents the real believer as a warrior, armed in panoply complete, having his loins girt about with truth; before him the breastplate of righteousness, on his feet the preparation of the gospel, on his head the helmet of salvation, in his right hand the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, and in his left the shield of faith. The prudence of the believer will secure him from rushing headlong into places of danger, when temptations assail him with their poisonous breath, and spread moral death through his soul. It will guard him from those contaminating examples among which holiness will wither and die, like the plants of Arabia, when the blasting sirocco of the desert passes over them.

Another enclosure that must be thrown around the christian's heart, is correct moral and religious principles. If error lodge in the head, it will pour a stream of corruption into the heart. If the agriculturist should come to embrace the belief that weeds may be suffered to grow among his corn, without injury, we all know that his corn will be choked, and his harvest fail. And if the christian admit into his belief important or fundamental errors, surely they will effectually destroy or greatly injure the holiness of his heart. He who means, therefore, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of his Saviour, must diligently, perseveringly, and with earnest prayer, consult the lively oracles of God. They are the rich repository of all that is important, necessary, grand, and beautiful, in religious and moral principles. And the man who reads them with a determination and desire to conform his life to those princi-...

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...ples, will stand unmoved amid the floods of error; and hold on his way, deviating not to the right hand nor to the left. *He will be built up on his most holy faith*, and he will realize an answer to the prayer of the Saviour, *Sanctify them through thy truth—thy word is truth*. But all the defences of prudence and correct principles, will be feeble without a spirit of prayer. This alone opens the windows of heaven, and draws down thence a blessing. Point me, then, to the man who makes rapid advances in grace, in whom the christian virtues flourish, and look beautiful, and depend upon it, that is a man of prayer. He feels the weakness of his own arm, the deceitfulness and depravity of his heart, and the strength of the enemy of his soul, and he looks to heaven for strength, and light and courage to run the christian's course with joy. But the husbandman does not stop with mere desires and prayers for an abundant harvest; and so with the christian. He vigilantly watches against his own heart, and the world, and the adversary. He is suspicious of everything so deceitful as sin, anywhere, and everywhere, and detests a thousand of her specious delusions, whereby unwary souls are entangled and fall. It is no matter how well armed is the soldier, if he sleep upon his post. It is no matter how well the farmer once provided for the security of his fields, if he now neglects them, nor watches against the various encroachments to which they are exposed. It is no matter how apparently sound is the christian's conversion, nor how correct are his principles, if he has sunk down upon the bed of sloth, and does not keep a lookout against the insidious enemies of his soul. If he do not watch he is certainly their prey. If he do not watch, his soul will be...

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...choked with tares, and laid waste by marauders, and holiness will languish and bear no fruit.

Nor is it less important that the christian exercise habitual self denial, in order that his spiritual growth may be vigorous and rapid. He must cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye that offends. He must not merely lament the wickedness of his heart, but make resolute efforts to purify it, and curb his rebellious disposition. The diligent farmer does not spare the weeds among his corn, however beautiful may be their foliage, or their flowers, or however harmless they may seem at present; nor does the faithful christian spare the sinful desires and feelings, that spring up in his mind, on account of their apparent beauty, remembering that even Satan is sometimes transformed into an angel of light; nor for their seeming harmlessness, well knowing that every day roots them deeper and fixes them more firmly in the heart. God, also, in addition to his special grace, often cultivates the heart of the christian who he intends shall *come to his grave in a full age, like a shock of corn fully ripe in his season*, by sending afflictions upon him. The plant that grows up in some sheltered spot, on which the winds and storms of heaven never beat, may indeed be elegant, but it is feeble. The mountain oak is made firm by the rocking of the whirlwind and the storm. So the man who passes through life in an almost unruffled calm, may be a christian, but his character will not have that stability and strength, which he has, over whom God rolls the waves of sorrow, and suffers the storms of adversity to beat upon him. The soul that seems most ripe for heaven, and bears the strongest impress of heaven, is the one that has often reeled and...

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...staggered, but never was broken, by the sweeping tempests of affliction.

By such cultivation and means as these, holiness is made to spring up and grow to maturity in the heart of man.

*In the third place, I am to consider the harvest.*

The sickle of the reaper is now put forth and the precious shock of corn is gathered. The plant that has so long been growing and ripening under the influence of showers and sunshine, wind and storm, is carefully placed in the storehouse, and its nourishing fruit garnered for man's use. So when the fully ripe Christian is cut down and removed from sight, his works are left behind for the benefit of survivors. The answers to his many prayers, his remembered Christian example, and his wise and affectionate counsels and warnings, fall in a shower of blessings upon them and give them strength to walk in the same path, and to transmit a like example to their descendants, when they also pass away.

When the fully ripe shock of corn is gathered, its separated seed is carefully secured in the granary, while the stalk and the chaff perish. So when the fully ripe Christian is laid in the grave, an immortal gem is separated and carried by angels to the garden of God in heaven. There it will be planted, and spring up and flourish, and bear fruit secure from the cold winds and frosts of earth, warmed and nourished by the river of life, and the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. There it will continue to shoot its roots downward, and its branches upward throughout eternity. It will forever be covered with beautiful flowers, and forever loaded with golden fruit. Spring, summer, and autumn,...

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...will there combine their influence, and throw their united charms over the whole.

It is hardly necessary, brethren and friends, to make a formal application of my subject to the occasion that has called us together. For you have already made it, I doubt not, and felt the appropriateness of the figure. Our venerable friend and father has truly *come to his grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season*. And this place has been the field where his christian character, although its earliest germination was in another place, has been expanding and bearing fruit for nearly sixty years, and at last the great reaper has gathered in the precious grain. It is fitting that we should spend a few moments by the side of this garnered dust, not to lament that he has been at last taken home to his eternal rest, but rather to refresh our memories by a brief history of his life, his principles, and his character. Would that many days, rather than a few hours, were afforded me to gather up these instructive reminiscences.

Dr. Packard was born in North Bridgewater, Massachusetts, in 1769, and was of the fourth generation from Samuel Packard, who came to this country in 1638, from England. When five years old, he, with the family, removed to Cummington, where he was trained to the business of farming till the age of twenty-one. His health then failing him, and the grace of God having about the same time inspired him with the new views and hopes of the Christian, he determined upon preparing by a public education for the ministry. He graduated at Dartmouth College in 1796, with the first or second appointment, and studied Theology with Dr. Asa Benton of Thetford, Vermont, a gentleman...

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...distinguished for his metaphysical acumen. He came to Shelburne in the fall of 1798. The people here were then very much divided in opinion upon religious doctrines, and Mr. Packard was the twentieth candidate. In him the parties were united, and gave him, I believe, an unanimous call to settlement. In 1800 he married Miss Mary Tirrell of Abington, who survives him. Their children have been eight, two sons and six daughters, four of whom have gone before him into eternity, and only one of whom has the melancholy satisfaction of being present to-day. In 1826 his son was settled with him as a colleague pastor, and though for several years past he has ceased to perform pastoral duties, his nominal pastoral relation has continued to the present time, a period of 56 years. During this ministry he received to the church 385 members, and baptized 410 persons. He was called abroad to attend not less than 200 councils, a fact that speaks loudly of the estimation placed upon his judgment and fidelity.

A secondary but very important work which he performed, was the instruction of not less than 30 students in Theology: many of whom became distinguished as ministers and authors, and acknowledged their indebtedness to the guidance of his sagacious powers.

*During his ministry, several revivals – I am not able to say how many – but some of them of great power, occurred. During one of these, he was assisted by Dr. Alexander of Princeton, a man of kindred powers and tastes, who had accidentally met him at college commencement. The scene which followed for two or three weeks, is graphically described in the life of that eminent man by his son.*

Dr. Packard was occasionally turned aside from his...

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...labors by poor health, the result generally of too little exercise of his body and too much by his ever active mind, and it required four or five months of horseback journeying to restore him; and that remedy he did not fail to urge upon other invalids as of extraordinary virtue. In the latter part of his life he understood better than at an earlier period, the laws of health, and did not fail rigidly to live up to them, and his great longevity was the result.

I have alluded to the private theological seminary which for so many years our friend maintained in his own domicile. But he devoted much time and labor to several public educational seminaries. From 1810 to 1825 he was a member of the Board of Trustees of Williams College, and from 1821 to 1854 he was a Trustee of Amherst College, both before and after its incorporation. For 45 years he scarcely ever failed of being present at the commencement of one or the other of these institutions. Of the latter, he was one of the earliest, most active, and most efficient founders and promoters. When it was necessary to incur odium and reproach to sustain and advance its interests, he was always among those who stood in the front rank to meet the brunt of the conflict. During the many dark and trying exigencies through which that college has been called to pass, we always expected to see Dr. Packard's seat occupied, whoever else was absent. It was cheering to listen to his wise counsel, his encouraging words, and to see his determined purpose and strong faith. And towards the close of his life, when the College had in a measure risen above its embarrassments, it was gratifying to have him and his venerable colleagues meet at our anniversaries, to rejoice in...

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...its freedom from debt and increase of means and patronage, when they had so often been met with accounts of an empty treasury, – inadequate means of instruction, and the want of public favor.

Such is a brief sketch of the labors of our friend: labors great enough and important enough to occupy half a century, and whose influence shall reach onwards through a thousand generations. Let us enquire what were the principles that underlaid and prompted the whole. I mean religious principles: for no others could prompt to his course of life, and sustain him through such conflicts. Those who have known Dr. Packard for the last forty years, can have no doubt what these principles were, through the long course of his ministry. But fortunately we have his own clear and deliberate statement of his religious belief, as he stood before you, six years ago, on the fiftieth anniversary of his ministry. He took a calm review of that wide interval, and declared to you what had been the burthen of his preaching. I do not know in our language a more clear, comprehensive, and definite summary of evangelical truth, than the one he then presented. He placed it on the very front of his address, as if it was the main thing he had to say. He well knew that he was on the borders of that period of life, when memory and judgment and the reasoning powers often do fail, that even the most powerful mind sometimes lets fall sentiments at war with all his previous professions. And therefore, he meant in that public and solemn manner, and by an appeal to the preaching of fifty years, to leave no doubt on the minds of survivors, what had been his belief.

"That system of religious belief," says he, "of which...

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...the doctrine of the cross is the chief corner stone, it has been my sincere and unwavering purpose to proclaim, whether men would hear or forbear. And now I would again express my full and firm conviction, that the doctrines of this system are the truths of God's word, which he employs to awaken, convince and convert sinners, and to advance Christians in holiness and preparation for heaven. I leave with you the record of my religious belief. God is the Almighty Creator, constant Preserver and kind Benefactor of the Universe, possessed of infinite attributes, and in character, counsel and works, absolutely perfect: – the entire Bible is God's inspired word, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice: the depravity of mankind is entire and universal: – God has entertained gracious and eternal purposes to save some of our apostate race, through the provisions of the Gospel: – Christ has made a full and complete atonement for sin by his death: – absolute Divinity belongs to Christ, the Saviour, and to the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier: – the heart of man is actually changed in regeneration, from entire sinfulness to a measure of holiness, by the direct operation of the Divine Spirit: – the exercises of godly repentance for sin, and affectionate trust in the Redeemer of sinners, are necessary fruits of regeneration: – sincere, hearty and persevering obedience to the will of God is the reliable evidence of personal piety and Christian character: – a day of final and universal judgment approaches for the trial of all the rational intelligent creatures of God: – a glorious heaven will be the eternal home of redeemed saints and holy angels: – and the prison of despair will be the everlasting abode of fallen spirits and impenitent, unbelieving men. This is a brief epitome of *some of the more im-*...

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*...portant* doctrines which God has revealed and required mankind to believe, and ministers to preach. May these and their kindred truths ever be proclaimed to this people as the testimony of God, and be abundantly he ed by the Holy Spirit as the means of conversion and edification to multitudes."

My brethren, well may we all, who love the peace and prosperity of this people, reiterate this prayer of your departed father, that such a gospel may ever be proclaimed here! For much as you esteemed and loved him, I apprehend few appreciate fully how much this town is indebted to his long and faithful ministration of such a Gospel. I see its influence even in your prosperity in temporal things. I see it in the high tone of intelligence and refinement in your families, and the excellencies of your schools; and especially in the strong hold religion has among you. The worldly eye sees not the connection between Dr. Packard's long ministry and these blessings for which you are distinguished; but I doubt not angels see it, and I am sure that discerning men may see it.

Under the moulding influence of such principles, we can easily see what would be the prominent traits of such a mind as that of Dr. Packard. In intellectual power, I hesitate not to place him among the leading men of his generation. Mental science was undoubtedly his forte: as perhaps we might expect from the character of his theological instruction, in this respect. The philosophical views of Dr. Burton were essentially adopted by his pupils, and also his mode of teaching; which consisted not so much in the reading of text books, as in trying to make the pupil read and understand his own intellectual and moral powers. It was...

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...the method of the ancient Academy; too much so probably for an age so abounding in standard books as the present. Dr. Packard did not neglect these: yet he could not be called learned in the sense of having accumulated vast stores of facts and principles from the works of others. In the latter part of his life he regretted that he had been too exclusive in the selection of his studies. To the wide field of physical science he had scarcely turned his attention, and when the extraordinary discoveries of modern times in that department were brought out one after another before him, he gave himself up too much to the feeling that nothing was too wonderful to be discovered, and he seemed to lose in a measure the power to discriminate between the true and the false; and hence I fear he became in extreme old age, too ready to fall in with that strange compound of physiology and psychology, called spiritualism. But let all that pass, as a matter scarcely worth naming: for we have a period of nearly eighty years, a large part of which was public active life, in youth, in manhood, and old age, from which to judge of his character. And through it all we see the strong intellect controlled by the power of grace, striving to do its Masters' work, and to do it most effectually. Error found in him a terrible foe, – not terrible because he was fierce and overbearing, but because he had such a clear view of truth and was so self-possessed when he took up the sword of the spirit, or the sword of philosophy, that his aim was sure, and the annihilation of the enemy certain. The errorist was so completely overthrown that he attempted not to rise. But if not subdued by grace, his heart was filled with hostility to one by whom he had been so signally baffled. And in this way, I doubt not,...

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...was our friend often subjected to bitter hatred and abuse from those who had felt the keenness of his sword. For he had great battles to fight in defence of the faith delivered to the saints. This was one of the great labors of his life, to which God called him. And in the execution of this, as well as all other commissions, he never shrunk from the path of duty nor left others to bear the brunt of the battle. You might be sure to find him by your side, if duty called him there, though no others came to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

But though Dr. Packard was almost constantly revolving in his mind some of the deepest problems of philosophy, and theology, it did not render him abstract in popular instruction, nor unsocial in his habits. In both respects the reverse was the fact. His preaching was eminently practical; such preaching as would lead men to think of themselves as sinners, and God as a sovereign, yet merciful; — such preaching as God honors in men's conversion. His habits, also, were peculiarly social, and though with kindred minds he loved to improve the social hour in discussing some high point of religion or philosophy, he had too much common sense to force such subjects upon unaccustomed minds, and enough of it to make him the pleasant companion of childhood.

But the crowning excellence of our friend's character was his deep toned piety. It was delightful to see how readily and naturally the acute metaphysician would turn at once from the most abstruse and lofty speculation and discussion, and sit as a little child at the feet of Jesus: — how cordially and appropriately

he would talk of experimental piety: – of the joys and sorrows, the privileges and dangers of the Christian, and...

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...how pleasant it was to bow before the throne of grace with words that showed he was no stranger there, but rather a child pleading with his father. With him every principle that he investigated was valued chiefly as it bore more or less directly upon Christian practice. Towards the close of life, it seemed to me that he had an intense desire to look within the veil, and find out experimentally something of the mode of communion between disembodied spirits. He got an idea that mesmerism would give him some glimpses of this sort, and this was one of the reasons that led him to take so deep an interest in that subject. It certainly did for a time increase his spirituality, whether permanently so, I cannot say. It may be that his love of discovering new things tempted him to pry into mysteries which God will not yield up to human curiosity. But I am sure that the hope and desire of making higher attainments in the knowledge of God and the spiritual world, was the grand motive that lay at the foundation of his researches.

Yet, my brethren, how much greater discoveries and attainments has he probably made in these high and holy subjects, within the last three days, than in all his earthly experience. Oh, with what intensity of soul is he now drinking in knowledge and joy from the great central fountain of truth and love! His mind, no longer in a shattered body, expatiates in all the vigor of angelic and immortal youth, and his heart no longer cramped and benumbed by sense and sin, takes up an angel's harp and emulates an angel's song.

My friends, I know not how such a funeral scene as this affects *you*. But with me it diminishes instead of...

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...increasing the repulsiveness of death and the grave. When those whom we love and esteem have gone before us into the dark valley, and we think of them as safe and happy on the heavenly shore, freed from the manifold evils of this mortal state, who can avoid feeling his courage in some measure strengthened to follow after them, and hoping that we also may be carried through that final conflict where they triumphed? And with every new departure of the great and the good, with whom we have conversed and prayed and labored here, how do the ties that bind us to the world become weaker, and the attractions of heaven stronger? How must these bereaved friends, especially, feel their hearts drawn upward, and eminently so, she who lays to-day in the grave the partner of her joys and sorrows for fifty-five years?

But not a few of us present have already passed the bounds of three score years, and some perhaps three score and ten; and shall not we, who now occupy the front rank on life's battle field, where death's arrows fly the thickest, shall not we be gathering strength and courage to meet the blow? Nay, shall not faith gain firmness and a clearer vision over the remains of our venerable departed friend! Surely the

ministerial associates of the departed, whether old or young, will make this an occasion of profit to their souls, and of stimulus to their labors. And who is there among this people, who will not bless God for the life and labors of their departed pastor and friend? The fruits of his influence and prayers they are now experiencing, far beyond what natural vision shows. Let them appreciate the legacy, and strive to maintain and transmit to posterity those...

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...institutions and that system of faith, which he and other holy men have planted here, so that much as they have done in the past, their influence in the future shall be an expanding power through all coming generations.

Delivered

Shelburne, September 19, 1855



## Sermon 549 The Catalytic Power of the Gospel

[E. Hitchcock, *The Catalytic Power of the Gospel*  
(T. R. Marvin, Boston, Mass., 1852)]

Text extracted from pdf available on Hathitrust.org at:

[Link to "The Catalytic Power of the Gospel"](#)

Sermon 549

### THE CATALYTIC POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Massachusetts Home Missionary Society,

at its Anniversary, in Lowell Institute, Boston,

May 25, 1852.

BY EDWARD HITCHCOCK, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF AMHERST COLLEGE.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS STREET.

1852.

*[Hitchcock makes a case for the uniqueness of the United States in promoting Christianity worldwide. He contrasts America to the countries of Europe and especially those dominated by Papists. Near the end he singles out Massachusetts as a state where Christianity has been allowed to flourish.]*

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At a regular Quarterly Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, held on the 8th June, 1852:

*"Voted, unanimously, That the thanks of the Society be tendered to the Rev. Dr. Hitchcock, for his Sermon delivered at their late Anniversary Meeting in Boston, and that he be requested to furnish a copy of the same for publication."*

Attest,

J. S. Clark, Secretary.

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## DISCOURSE.

MATTHEW 13:33.

*The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

It is not often that the discoveries of modern science elucidate and make more impressive the language of Scripture. The text, however, is one of these rare instances. It describes, indeed, a very familiar process,—that of bread-making,—which, as a practical matter, has been known from very early times. But the principles on which some parts of the operation depend, are even yet among the most recondite in chemical science. Something is known of them, however; and although the person who is acquainted only with the process of leavening bread, must be struck with the peculiar force and appropriateness of this illustration; yet the man acquainted with its rationale, cannot but realize it more deeply. I shall feel justified, therefore, in spending a few moments in scientific details, which would be appropriate to the chemical lecture room; nay, I should feel condemned, if I did not take this course, because I am confident that I can thus make the beauty and force of this passage more...

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...obvious and impressive. And in doing this, and introducing a few technical phrases, I hope my hearers will not charge me with pedantry, till they have heard me through. Gladly would I avoid these scientific details, could I in any other way bring out the full strength and appropriateness of the text.

The phrase, *kingdom of heaven*, in this passage, demands a passing exegetical notice. The radical idea contained in it, as well as in the cognate expression, *kingdom of God*, is that of dominion or government. Even when it means heaven itself, as it sometimes does, this original idea clings to it; for in heaven the most prominent manifestation of the Deity will be through his government. In the New Testament, however, this phrase often designates the reign of the gospel dispensation; and hence it very naturally is sometimes put for the principles of the gospel. Such seems to be its precise meaning in the text. Christ evidently meant to say, that the truths of the gospel, when brought into contact with society, operate like the leaven of the bread-maker, when mingled with the dough.

And how, precisely, does this operate? Chemistry, to some extent, informs us. It is an example of those changes in bodies, which, for the want of a better name, is called Catalysis. This term embraces a great variety of decompositions and recompositions, which are not explained by the common principles of analysis and synthesis. In catalysis, the mere presence of a certain body, among the particles of another, produces the most extensive changes among those particles; and yet the body...

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...thus operating, is itself unaffected. Thus, a stream of hydrogen poured upon a piece of platinum will take fire, that is, unite with the oxygen of the atmosphere through the influence of the platinum; and yet that metal will remain unaltered.

In cases of catalysis, more analogous to the example referred to in the text, the substance itself, which is the agent of the change, is in a decomposing condition. This is the case with leaven, or, as it is sometimes called, ferment or yeast. One sees, from the commotion among its particles, that a change is going on in its internal condition, and that new compounds are forming out of its elements. Introduced in that state into the meal, it communicates a change to the whole mass, analogous to that which it is itself experiencing. This is called fermentation. In bread it is not allowed to proceed very far, but is arrested by the heat of the oven.

It is found that the remarkable power of leaven to change the character of compounds, depends on a peculiar principle which it contains, called *Diastase*. This substance is so powerful in its action, that one part of it, mixed with two thousand parts of starch, will change the whole into sugar in a few hours.

How it is that so small a quantity of one substance should be able to produce such extensive changes in another, thousands of times larger, it may not be easy in all instances to see. But in the case of leaven, we have a probable theory; for, as the particles of the leaven, themselves in the act of change, come in contact with some of the particles...

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...of the body into which it is introduced, they start a similar change there; and this, communicated from particle to particle, pervades the mass until the whole is leavened. This view is certainly a statement of what takes place; but if asked why such effects should be propagated through bodies by mere contact, I confess myself unable to see.

The history of catalytic changes, then, furnishes us with two principles of importance in elucidating the text. The first is, that it needs but a very small quantity of leaven to produce a complete change in a very large amount of farinaceous matter. The second is, that it is only necessary to start the process of change in one or a few spots in the mass, where the particles of the leaven happen to be, in order to have it permeate the entire heap. It is not necessary that a particle of the leaven should actually come in contact with every particle of the mass. It need only commence a process in one spot, which will spread of itself through the whole, or at least to a great extent.

To return now to my text, such a power does Christ declare the gospel to possess. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.* Hence I take for my subject on this occasion, *The Catalytic Power of the Gospel*. I wish to show that wherever that is cast into the dead and inert mass of human society, it shows a quickening, expanding and multiplying power possessed by no other human institution.

In order to avoid misapprehension, let me premise one or two remarks. Because I shall attempt to...

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...show that gospel truth has a mighty power over the human heart, let no one imagine me a disbeliever in the necessity of a special divine influence to give that truth success. In that doctrine, most cordially do I acquiesce; and when I speak of a peculiar efficacy of the truth, I assume that the conversion of men is *not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*. My only object is to show that the truth, in itself, possesses a peculiar adaptedness to win its way and transform society. And surely it will

encourage our efforts, as well as make us feel more deeply our obligations, to learn what an admirable instrument God has put into our hands with which to labor.

Let us now look at the evidence of the catalytic power of the gospel.

In the first place, such a power is derived from the adaptedness of the gospel to human wants.

How well adapted it is to promote the temporal welfare and happiness of man, may be seen by comparing the condition of society in Christian lands with that of heathen and Mohammedan countries. So striking is the contrast, that truly and literally we may say of Christianity, it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. But it is mainly of man's spiritual wants, that I speak at this time. For though felt more or less by all, and by many with great intensity, they are met and satisfied nowhere save in the gospel. Yet how purblind men are to this panacea! They search for remedies every where else. They run the whole round of sensual grati...

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...fication in the vain expectation of relief; but they find only a bitter aggravation of their sufferings. They toil for wealth, for honor, for power, and perhaps are eminently successful. But the void in their hearts is only made larger and more painful. They resort to social enjoyments, or to learning, or to splendid worldly enterprises; but all in vain; the terrible craving of their nature continues, and, like the cast-out unclean spirit, they go through dry places, seeking rest, yet finding none. They resort finally to deeds of charity, to self-mortifications, and to the rites of a religion of forms; and here they fancy they must find peace. But if they do, it is only a false and a transient peace; the peace of self-delusion, not the peace of God. And when some trying exigency of life overtakes them, the visor drops from their eyes, and the cheated soul within cries out in anguish for something to lean upon in the hour of suffering and of death.

Such are the vain phantoms which most men pursue through all their days, urged on by the deep, restless, unsatisfied wants of their nature. Nor does one in a thousand fancy that he is walking in a vain show, until God's Spirit open his eyes to see the plague of his own heart. He is amazed and overwhelmed by the view. Such deep and dreadful depravity, pervading his whole nature, he never once suspected. He can live with such a heart no longer. Ah, he sees now what he wants, and prostrate in the dust he cries out, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. His prayer prevails. He rises a new creature in Christ Jesus. The aching void in his heart is filled,—filled...

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...with divine love and divine peace. He is saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. He has found, at last, the grand panacea which nature could never discover.

*"This remedy did wisdom find,  
To heal diseases of the mind,  
The sovereign balm, whose virtues can  
Restore the ruined creature, man."*

[Source: Hymn, *The Power of the Gospel*]

During the preparatory process that goes before regeneration, as well as in the act, the peculiar adaptedness of another great doctrine of the gospel to human wants is made most manifest. The man is deeply conscious of having broken the law of God; and when he is made to feel how reasonable that law is, and how holy, he does not see how he can be pardoned. The law only condemns him, but discloses not one gleam of hope. He looks around solicitously for some way of escape. He inquires whether he can, himself, make any offerings to God that will be a ground of pardon. Especially may not the sacrifice of animal life avail? To such sacrifices have men in all ages and countries resorted, either by the promptings of instinct or revelation. And it shows, at least, how general is the conviction of men, that sin cannot be pardoned without some expiation made by a substitute. But a voice from the Scriptures replies, It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. The sinner sinks down in despair, at this announcement. How well prepared, then, to receive another, issuing from the same inspired record,—

*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.*

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Christ being come, a high priest of good things to come, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. The great central truth of a vicarious atonement gradually opens upon his agitated mind. At first, he sees it only dimly and doubtingly. But, ere long, his heart perceives that here is the divine remedy for its otherwise hopeless case. Here, mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace embrace each other. Thus God can be just, while he justifies the believer. Faith can doubt no longer. It rushes to the cross, and pardon, peace and holy joy succeed to anguish and despair. The most pressing want man ever experiences—the desire of forgiveness—is thus fully met; and ever after the pardoned sinner, addressing his Saviour, exclaims.,

*“E’er since by faith I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.  
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,  
I’ll sing thy power to save,  
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue,  
Lies silent in the grave.”*

[Source: Hymn, *A Fountain Opened*]

The character of the Being who made the atonement, is another doctrinal point most wisely adapted to the wants of man. Whatever may be said as to those engaged in intellectual pursuits and accustomed to abstractions, the great body of men have ever associated some material or human characteristic in their idea of God. And the Old Testament, out of regard to this want of human nature, has made...

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...most of its representations of the Deity quite anthropomorphous. But it is in the character of Jesus Christ, that this want is most fully met. In that character the divine and the human are so beautifully blended, as to invite confidence without destroying veneration. Had it been said only that the Word was

with God and was God, man would feel as if there were an infinite gulf between him and his Saviour. But when it is added, that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, the idea of a common nature draws us to him, and especially when he calls us his brethren, and declares that he was tempted in all points as we are, for the very purpose of affording succor to them that are tempted, and to stand as our daysman, our Advocate and Intercessor, our hearts can no longer resist the appeal, and we approach the throne of grace boldly, because we know that we have a sympathizing friend to plead our cause. And yet he is an almighty friend, and what more can we ask? No wonder that the heart cleaves to such a Saviour with a supreme and undying love.

*“Clothed with our nature still, he knows  
The weakness of our frame,  
And how to shield us from the foes  
Whom he himself o’ercame.*

*Nor time, nor distance e’er shall quench  
The fervor of his love;  
For us he died in kindness here,  
For us he lives above.”*

[Source: Hymn, *“The Sympathy of Jesus”*]

It is hardly strange that to the acutest minds, unenlightened by revelation, this world should seem to be a hopeless enigma; or that it should be...

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...looked upon as a state of retribution, and that the half Christian Manichee should imagine two supreme principles, one of good and the other of evil, holding with each other an everlasting war. But there are two doctrines of revelation that solve the dark riddle, and show to the eye of faith the full-orbed glories of the Divine Benevolence behind the thickest clouds. One of these doctrines is, that the world is in a fallen condition, and because sin has entered it, suffering has followed; so that, in fact, the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain. The other is, that God’s providence sits watchfully above the whole scene, and so controls every event, that the final result shall be happiness and glory. It is wonderful how these truths resolve the most agitating doubts, and anchor the soul to a rock amid the fiercest tempests of life. Faith does not fear but that infinite power, wisdom and benevolence, will bring order out of confusion, peace out of discord, holiness out of pollution, and everlasting happiness out of temporary misery. She can see how wisely adapted even the evils of life are to the moral discipline essential to a fallen being. And when the tempests howl around, and the billows come pouring over her, it is enough for her to know that all things work together for good, to them that love God. She has reached that happiest condition of human existence, unreserved submission to the will of God.

Springing from such a system of doctrines, cordially embraced, there are hopes and consolations such as nothing else can give. All other hopes and consolations fail to satisfy; but these leave...

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...nothing to be desired. The man does not cease to be interested in this world, but he is more interested in another. The consciousness that his eternal future is safe, makes every blessing the sweeter which he receives on his way thither. And it also lightens every labor and neutralizes every trial. So near to immortal and unalloyed happiness, of how little consequence to him are the short-lived inconveniences he meets in his brief sojourn below; especially when he knows how necessary his trials and labors are to prepare him for eternal joy! Oh, if such a man has not within him the elements of happiness, they cannot be found on earth. Daily the manna falls from heaven around him; and even in the thirsty desert, he can smite the rock, and the cool and refreshing waters will gush out. And he knows that when he comes to the banks of Jordan, the waters, touched by the wand of faith, will divide for his passage.

Such is the wonderful adaptation of the gospel system to human wants. How could it do more to fill and satisfy them. Now my argument is, that whenever men are made conscious of their spiritual wants, and such a gospel is made known to them, it will be eagerly embraced. And if embraced by a few, they cannot but make it known to others; and thus, if no untoward influences prevent, will the whole mass at length be leavened. It does, indeed, meet with a powerful obstruction in human depravity; and were it unadapted to the necessities of man, it could make no progress; but now it has a catalytic power which enables it to find its way through the sluggish mass.

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In the second place, man's conscience testifies to the truth of the gospel system, and thus prepares the way for its admission to the heart.

Of all the powers of the human soul, conscience has suffered least from the blasting influence of the apostasy of the race. The corrupt heart is able to make every other faculty its pander and slave; but conscience always stands erect and unsubdued, ready to lift her voice in defence of the right and to rebuke the wrong. Her mouth may, indeed, for a time, be forcibly closed, and her sensibilities blunted, by the hot-searing iron of iniquity, but her internal vitality remains unaffected; and when, at length, her liberty and vigor are restored, her retributions will be terrible.

Now it is an interesting fact, that unperverted conscience is a stern advocate for evangelical religion. Tell an unconverted man that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and his pride and self-sufficiency will resent the charge; but his conscience knows it to be true. Tell him that with such a heart he could not be happy in heaven, and that, therefore, he must be created anew in Christ Jesus, and his corrupt inclinations will muster a stout defiance against the mortifying truth; yet the faithful inward monitor often compels him to acknowledge its reality. Hence you will often see the strange anomaly, of a man confessing his utterly lost condition by nature, and his entire unfitness for heaven without a new heart, and yet so bolstered up by pride and self-sufficiency, that he feels little anxiety and makes no efficient efforts to change his condition.

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Again, in spite of all the struggles of perverted reason, conscience often compels men to acknowledge the justice of the penalty annexed to sin. Sophistry may enable them to make out a very clear demonstration of the inconsistency between divine benevolence and eternal punishment. But conscience compels them to acknowledge that they deserve it. They know that with such wicked hearts, they could never experience any thing else but punishment, and they are conscious of having done



nothing to lay God under obligation to give them a better heart; so that, without his interposition, eternal misery follows as a natural consequence.

But though thus dependent upon God's grace, conscience will not release them from their obligations to love and serve Him; for that faithful and keen-eyed observer testifies that their inability arises from a perversion of the powers which God has given them, and not from any natural defect; and, therefore, they are as much bound to love and obey their Father in heaven, as a perverse child is to exercise filial affection and do service to his earthly father.

In this dilemma, how strenuous an advocate for the doctrine of special grace does conscience become. Instead of pleading the sinner's apology on the ground of inability, and striving to release him from obligation, she charges him with having crippled himself, and therefore as lying under the full weight of responsibility to the divine law. Yet how certain to perish, if the special power of God do not interpose!

In the human conscience, then, we have a pow-...

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...erful instrumentality for the diffusion of the gospel. Once let the leaven of its great principles be brought into close contact with that conscience, and in spite of the hostile influence of pride, selfishness and passion, it will rouse and transform the torpid soul, and make it henceforth alive to duty and to God. That soul will in fact become a new creature in Christ Jesus, old things having passed away and all things become new. But such a perfect network of sympathies is human society, that you cannot change the feelings and character of one individual, and not send a like influence into the hearts of those around him. Let one man's conscience be roused to do its office, and his neighbor's conscience cannot be wholly quiet. So numerous are the points of contact between men, that no one can remain long wholly ignorant of a moral change in his neighbor, nor unaffected by it when known. Thus, through the force of conscience, a self-propagating power is imparted to religious reformatations. Once start the process in a particular spot, and conscience will become the catalytic agency to transmit it from individual to individual, we cannot tell how widely.

In the third place, the history of Christianity shows it to be possessed of an extraordinary catalytic power.

Recall to mind the circumstances under which the gospel was first introduced. Its Author, a poor, persecuted wanderer, chose twelve illiterate fishermen for his council, his heralds, his body-guard, and his successors in propagating his system of truth among men. The whole world, too, stood armed...

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...to the teeth to resist its introduction. All its prejudices, its social, political, religious, and even its military power, was ready to be arrayed against the gospel; and, in fact, all these forces were employed to arrest its progress and to root it out of the world. Ten times, within three hundred years, did the mighty emperors of Rome assail Christianity with fire and sword. And they felt sure of a triumph; for how could a few feeble, contemptible fanatics, without wealth, power, or influence, resist an array that had conquered the world. But how little did these worldly wise rulers know of the inherent vitality, the self-sustaining, and self-propagating power of the gospel! So that, in fact, while they supposed they were giving the finishing blow to the system, it was silently and irresistibly working its way into the

hearts and affections of all classes of the community, till at length, in the beginning of the fourth century, it became the established religion of the empire.

Perhaps you will say this was the effect of the miraculous agency that was manifested in the church in apostolic times. This might have had some influence, in the first introduction of Christianity; yet far less, even then, I apprehend, than is generally supposed; for it is usually quite easy to get rid of the influence of a miracle by imputing it to imposture, jugglery and delusion, as we know was done in those days. But it is not settled whether the power of working miracles was possessed by any after the days of the Apostles; certainly that power was withdrawn a century or two before the days of Constantine. Nor have we...

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...evidence that there was any thing peculiar in the Divine Influence which was exerted upon the hearts of men in primitive times. It seems to have operated then, as now, according to the established laws of mind, and in proportion to the means employed. Furthermore, we have the testimony of the Bible to the position, that men are no more apt to be convinced by miracles than by the ordinary truths of the gospel; for if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. We must, therefore, impute the extraordinary success of the gospel in early times, and in the midst of fiery persecution, mainly to its adaptation to human wants and the human conscience.

In subsequent periods of the world's history, this same experiment has been often repeated. And it has ever been true, that the kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation. No loud trumpets have sounded its advent; no powerful array of means has ushered it in. A few obscure men, without money or influence, and perhaps with little of worldly wisdom or policy, unarmed, save by the Bible and faith, have gone into the arena of conflict, like David to meet Goliath. And so inadequate have the champions and their weapons seemed, that the world have looked upon them with as much contempt and derision as Philistia's giant did upon David. And yet the despised pebble has found its way to the giant's forehead, and the Galilean has conquered.

Take Great Britain, for an example. The conquests of that kingdom by Julius Caesar, by the...

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...Saxons, the Danes and the Normans, are all on record, and constitute distinctly marked epochs of history. But who can tell us when and how Christianity won its more thorough and enduring conquest, penetrating where the arms of the Roman, the Dane, and the Saxon, could not reach, and converting tribes of the rudest heathen into civilized and Christian men? It is indeed said, that Augustine and a few other monks were once sent as missionaries to Britain; but how feeble an instrumentality to accomplish a work a thousand times more extensive and important than all the conquests to which Britain has ever been subject, or which she has made by her arms since her political existence began. Had there not been an unseen, self-propagating power to carry forward the work, begun only in here and there a spot by humble missionaries, the whole mass could never have been so thoroughly permeated.

The same fact exhibits itself when we compare Christian with Pagan or Mohammedan nations. In the latter, you meet with much more of the external manifestations of religion than in the former. Temples, images, processions, public prayers, and other rites, are rife every where; but, after all, you perceive that little influence, save an injurious one, is exerted in such countries upon the public morals, manners

or welfare; yet, in Christian lands, it is manifest that an influence has gone deeper into the public heart and conscience; and hence you find more kindness, amenity and decency, more of civilization and respect for morality and piety. The rude and ferocious elements of human nature are...

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...more tamed and moulded by Christian influences, than by Pagan or Mohammedan.

I believe this is true of all nominally Christian lands, although we must confess that, in many of them, the gospel has been well nigh deprived of its vitality, and little more than its external covering remains. But even there, Christianity exerts a decidedly better influence than the most refined system of human invention. Moreover, we may impute whatever of good moral influence is exerted by Mohammedanism to the principles—and these are not few and unimportant—which it has purloined from the Bible.

Again, you will find that just in proportion as Christianity has been corrupted and the Bible is withheld from circulation among the people, will the literary, civil, social and moral condition of a nation be degraded. Suppose you had the power to pass suddenly from such a country as New England, or Old England, or Scotland, into Austria, Russia, Spain, or France. Would you need a geographer to tell you that you were in a land where a withering blight had come over the pure gospel? While you would meet crucifixes, oratories, cathedrals, chapels, and confessionals every where, you would find the Bible nowhere. And while you would hear *te deums* and chanted prayers, and the praises of the virgin and the saints in all places of worship, and on all days and hours, you would listen in vain for unadulterated gospel truth at any time. And while the antiquated walls of monasteries and convents would meet you in every place, the academy and the school-house would be...

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...wanting in all places. And when you became acquainted with the character of the great body of the population in those lands, you could not doubt that the gospel, which you had seen doing so much in the country from which you came, to elevate, enlighten and bless, was here shorn of the lock of its strength, and had been moulded and trimmed to adapt it to systems of superstition, ignorance, intolerance and despotism.

The whole history of the missionary enterprise, foreign and domestic, affords decisive proof of the leavening influence of the gospel. To mere worldly wisdom, the most striking feature of that enterprise is the total inadequacy between the means employed and the expected results. When a man, who has been accustomed to estimate the amount of outlay and preparation requisite in any successful undertaking in commerce, manufactures or agriculture, or who knows the amount of effort necessary in a successful political campaign,—when such a man looks at the very slender instrumentality which the ablest missionary societies employ for the conversion of the world, it seems to him a want of wisdom amounting to infatuation, to go forward. Why, men are more tenacious of their false systems of religion than of any thing else; and yet you send one, or two, or half-a-dozen, plain, powerless men, among twenty or fifty millions, and are disappointed if, in a few years, you do not hear of numerous conversions.

Alike inefficacious do such feeble instrumentalities appear to the heathen and the Mohammedans themselves. And this is one of the grounds on...

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...which missionaries are allowed to pursue their work, unmolested, in countries most hostile to their plans. Imagine, for instance, that the Emperor of China, or the Shah of Persia, or the Sultan of Turkey, should learn that one, or two, or even half-a-dozen, unarmed, inoffensive men, had taken up their abode in Canton, or Oroomiah, or Constantinople, with a view to preach the doctrines of Christianity, and to teach the principles of human science and literature to the young. Do you think that either of these despots would have any fears excited that the established religion of the country was in danger? Would he not treat the suggestion with contempt, and look on the missionaries as deluded men, whose efforts to proselyte would be harmless, and whose literary instructions would be valuable to the empire, and therefore their residence might be tolerated? And if a British minister would be gratified by having these teachers protected, how ready would he be to issue the decree which should place them and their followers on a footing with their other Christian subjects. But let these rulers learn something of the catalytic power of the gospel, by seeing multitudes converted, as if by a mysterious influence, and you would see the sword of persecution unsheathed and martyrs multiplied. And it is mainly because such conversions have not been in general extensive enough to arrest the attention of rulers, that persecutions by the government are so infrequent. I fear that they are yet to put the faith and courage of the church severely to the test. For by and by, heathen and Mohammedan nations will learn that the leaven of the gospel, hid in the com-...

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...munity by the humble missionary, has, unperceived, sent its transforming power through the whole torpid mass, and that their false systems are crumbling into ruins.

A still more manifest example of this mighty though unnoticed influence, is often seen in our own land, when the Domestic Missionary Society sends its benevolent agencies into some waste place where iniquity is triumphant. In such a place are found, it may be, a few humble Christians, but the wealth, the fashion, and worldly influence, are all hostile to the truth; and when the missionary calls around him the few followers of Christ at the prayer meeting and in the church, it only makes matter for amusement and ridicule among others, who, in view of the apparent feebleness of the instrumentality, exclaim, with Sanballat and Tobiah of old, What do these feeble Christians? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. But the despised leaven silently operates; God's Spirit comes down to urge the movement forward, and the great mountain that seemed so strong, crumbles down and becomes a plain. The gospel triumphs; decency and refinement of manners takes the place of obscenity and vulgarity; temperance succeeds to drunkenness; peace to discord; thrift and enterprise to decay and poverty; and spiritual religion to errors of every name. Yet so quietly was the change effected, through the gospel's catalytic power, that opposition and skepticism stand amazed.

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From this principle of the self-propagating power of the gospel, thus established, we may derive inferences of great importance, and eminently adapted to encourage and strengthen those engaged in the missionary enterprise, whether domestic or foreign. Indeed, since the recent rapid expansion of our population across this broad continent, these terms, domestic and foreign, have become nearly synonymous.

In the first place, this subject should inspire us with strong confidence in the power of divine truth.

The current of worldliness often sets so strongly against the truth, and the means appointed for its diffusion seem so simple and inadequate, that we are apt to be disheartened, and to forget the mighty power which the doctrines of the gospel possess to work their way amid obstacles, and become mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. But when we recollect what that truth has done in time past, how it has transformed whole nations as if by magic, how at this moment, abused and perverted as we know it to be, it makes Christian nations stand out on the world's panorama so conspicuously, and when we think of its wonderful adaptation to the deepest wants of man, and what a stern advocate it finds in the human conscience, and especially how thorough is the renovation of the individual who gives himself up entirely to its influence, we ought to be ashamed of our distrust of its power, and to feel that we have in our hands an instrument which, by God's blessing, can and will create anew and sanctify our lost world. So...

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...that wherever we have an opportunity to bring the gospel in contact with the human conscience and reason, we ought to urge its claims with as undoubted an assurance of its efficacy as a woman exercises when she hides only a modicum of leaven in three measures of meal.

Secondly, the subject is full of encouragement to those who are laboring in weakness with great obstacles and discouragements, in the dissemination of the truths of the gospel.

Let them remember that the leaven, when mixed with the meal, seems to be lost, and little or no visible effect is produced, until at length it is found that the whole loaf is thoroughly leavened. Let them remember, too, that the pure gospel, when brought in contact with men's consciences, is as sure to commence a catalytic process there, as good leaven is in the meal, although without special grace it will not result in conversion. Nor will the laborer, perhaps, perceive any good effect produced for a long time, and possibly not while he lives. But moral reformations usually move very slowly onward. It needs time for the leaven to work. And in many cases the sower is not permitted to gather the sheaves. But if they are finally reaped, he that soweth and he that reapeth will rejoice together. Let him who is faithful in doing his duty in some barren field of labor, be assured that the truth has never yet failed to manifest, sooner or later, its transforming power. His field of labor may be narrow, and his discouragements many; but let him bear in mind that he has a mighty instrument...

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...to work with, and an almighty God pledged to sustain him.

In the third place, the subject shows the fallacy of the doctrine, that the world is growing worse, and will continue to grow) worse, in spite of all efforts to spread the gospel.

The world does indeed abound with wickedness, and often the success of the truth in a place is the occasion of a grosser development of iniquity. But the truth has the advantage, because it meets and satisfies man's highest wants so completely, and enlists in its favor the human conscience. And whence arises this want of confidence in the truth, as an instrument of the world's conversion, among these our brethren, some of whom are missionaries, and yet they do not believe the world can be converted by the gospel, but will continue to grow worse till the Saviour makes a visible display of his power? Have

they not felt the power of truth in their own souls? and have they not seen its mighty efficacy upon the souls of others? Do they doubt its ability, when applied by God's Spirit, to convert the world? If the world is growing worse, how happens it that all Christian nations, even where the gospel is dreadfully perverted, are so far superior in character and condition to Pagan and Mohammedan nations? Surely these men forget the catalytic power of the gospel, as developed in history. True, the improved physical, social and intellectual condition of a nation, is far from being its conversion to God. But it is an important prerequisite to that conversion. And it does imply that some in that nation are truly converted; and why is not all this...

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...an earnest of the final and complete triumph of pure religion, if its comparatively few genuine disciples do their duty? For every accession to their number increases their power; and why may not that leavening influence go on till it has reached the world's entire population?

In the gospel, then, you have an agency abundantly adequate to the work; and why then call in miraculous power? for we know that it is a settled principle of the Divine Government, not to work a miracle when established agencies are sufficient.

Finally, this subject should greatly encourage and animate the hopes and efforts of those engaged in the work of missions.

They learn from it that they need not be discouraged, though the common principles by which men judge of the probable success of their enterprises, should show their chance to be small. The fact that they are following a divine command, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, may, indeed, be sufficient to give them courage and perseverance amid powerful difficulties. But it is important, also, to know what an extraordinary instrument they possess for carrying on the enterprise; how it works its way into the hearts of men and silently changes their characters, and the whole aspect of society; and sends down an influence, they cannot tell how far, into generations unborn. It is, indeed, quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It takes a stronger hold of society than...

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...all other influences, and abides longer. Its secret energy rouses human society into action, and propagates the catalytic change from individual to individual, from family to family, from community to community, and sometimes from kingdom to kingdom. Nor can the missionary tell, when he deposits the leaven of the gospel in one spot, even though scarcely heeded there, but he has started a process which shall go radiating outwards over a whole continent; for thus it has often done.

But though thus adapted to cheer the missionary in every land, this principle affords much more encouragement in some countries than in others; and most of all, on American soil; to the home missionary here. To prove and illustrate this from the analogies of my text, let us recur to certain facts respecting catalytic operations in nature, which I neglected at the commencement of this discourse.

The essential principle to which I mainly refer, is this: that in order to make leaven, or any other catalytic agent operate, it is necessary that the mass to be leavened should be in a certain state, as to

consistency, temperature and permeability. The baker well knows, that it is of no use to hide leaven in a mass of frozen dough, nor unless its temperature is a good deal above the freezing point. So if from any other cause it has become condensed and rigid, the leaven cannot spread itself among the particles, and little or no effect will be produced, even though the leaven be in the best condition.

Apply now these principles to the dissemination of the gospel. Attempt to propagate its truths in a country where Heathenism, or Mohammedanism, or...

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...corrupt Christianity, is firmly established, is sustained by the learned few, and the ignorant and superstitious many, and by wealth and influence; is linked inseparably to the government, and can show a long list of illustrious defenders. By such causes the false system has been knit firmly together, and is settled down into a hard, impenetrable mass, which resists all change. Without a miracle, you would expect that if the truth should make any headway, it would be slow and difficult. Whereas in a nation where a false religious system sets loose upon the people, and has little social or governmental support, and especially where commerce, education and free principles are breaking up the torpid and indurated mass, the way is prepared for the gospel's catalytic power to show its mighty transforming energy.

Facts now corroborate the truth of these principles. For never has the gospel made rapid progress in any country where a false system of religion has entrenched itself behind the prejudices, the social habits, the pecuniary interests, the splendor of rites and forms, and governmental favor; and its most signal triumphs have been witnessed where the false system has but a feeble hold upon the public mind, or men have begun to think for themselves. Certain conditions seem necessary, in order that the leaven may work; nor where these are wanting are we to expect success, any more than that the laws of chemistry will be set aside in the process of bread-making. God does sometimes, indeed, give unexpected success by the power of his Spirit, to show that, after all, the efficiency lies with him. But...

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...such cases are exceptions, which we cannot calculate upon, and are not our rule of judgment or of duty.

From these principles we should confidently infer, that Mohammedanism, and especially Popery, would offer more powerful obstructions to the spread of the gospel than any other systems of error. Hence it is, that while missionary stations are multiplied among the heathen, they are yet so few in the great centres of Mohammedan and Papal influence in Asia and Europe. Nor can we doubt, that long after every heathen pagoda has been converted into a Christian temple—nay, long after the Bible shall have supplanted the Koran in every mosque and minaret—will the perverted Christianity of forms, propped up by leagues and bayonets, present its yet unbroken front, to be breached only in the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

On the other hand, from these same principles, we infer that nowhere on earth is there such a preparation for the spread of pure Christianity as in our own land. Here we have no inert and indurated mass of dead formalism to break up; no frozen and petrified system of rites and ceremonies to arrest the leavening process; no iron arm of government to check the onward movement. But the genial light and warmth of free institutions and of general education, have brought the community into a state most

favorable for receiving the gospel and giving it free course. Wherever faithfully planted, it is sure to communicate and spread its vitalizing influence outward and onward; and if...

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...Christians will only do their duty, they may be sure that the whole land will be leavened.

And here I ought to mention another chemical principle that has a parallel in the condition of our country. Chemists tell us that elements in their nascent state, that is, when first produced, unite far more readily than they do afterwards. Now the elements of our social condition are as yet, in a great measure, in a nascent state; and therefore more ready to be operated upon and form valuable combinations than in the old world, where every thing has long since become immovably fixed, either by affinities within or pressure without. Oh how important that the gospel exert its catalytic power upon our population, before that same binding and paralyzing process pass upon them! The wide world does not furnish another field of missionary labor so promising. I mean not by this, that other countries are not open to the gospel, and that missionary efforts should be limited to our own land. God bless these efforts and increase them a hundred fold in every land. But I do mean, that our country preeminently invites and demands efforts for its evangelization. I do mean, that it is a more promising and a more important field than any other on the globe, and therefore calls for every heart and every hand to engage in it.

Do I seem to any to be taking too strong ground? Let me propose to them an experiment, which I sincerely wish all my hearers could try, to test this opinion. Let them take the next steamer across the Atlantic, and in one fortnight they would find themselves on ground very favorable for a compari-...

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...son. They would be traversing lands where state religions exist, with all their pompous and imposing rites and ceremonies, with their exclusive and intolerant spirit, and their hostility to freedom of opinion, and to all that is vital in personal piety. Religion there, is sustained by governmental decrees and by bayonets. Throttled in the embraces of the state, its lifeless form is made use of as a speaking- trumpet, through which are proclaimed, not the doctrines of God, but of man; such as the divine right of kings, the duty of unreserved submission to the government and the church; the infallibility of the church, not of the Bible. The sweet countenance of gospel charity has been changed into that of a persecuting fiend; and the snaky locks of a gorgon cover her head, freezing and petrifying all around. All places are full of religious forms, but alas, to find its power you must search long and deep. The very highways are studded with crosses and crucified Christs, with oratories and images of the virgin, while the towns abound with vast and venerable cathedrals and chapels, full of golden images, splendid paintings, and sacred relics; and the magnificent organ peals along the sounding arches and thrills the wondering soul, as the gilded priests chant their *te deums*, their *pater nosters*, and their *ave marias*. You enter the convent at the sound of the vesper bell, and a thousand white veiled nuns are kneeling around you, and gorgeous music lends enchantment to the vesper hymn. Every where in the streets you meet the cassocked priest, and often the imposing procession, while the multitudes uncover their heads as it passes. In...

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...short, to an American, accustomed to the simplicity of our modes of worship, the most prominent feature in European lands, save in the glorious fast-anchored isle—and even there to great extent— is, that in spite of the most imposing externals, the whole is little more than heartless formality—a wretched substitute for the bread of life. Yet when he sees how firmly rooted is this system in the pride and prejudice, the worldly interest, the interests of despotic governments, and a swarming priesthood, and how it is woven into the very texture of society, he cannot but feel that little short of a miracle will be required for effecting a revolution. With what deep interest, then, after only a few weeks of such observation in those lands, will the heart of the Christian American turn towards his own country. In the hallowed language of our gubernatorial proclamations he will exclaim, “*God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts!*” Save her religion from the base alloy of formalism, superstition and intolerance. Save her system of education from the blighting touch of aristocracy and priestcraft. Save her free institutions from the savage ferocity of the ignorant and unprincipled many, and the grinding oppression of the despotic few. Save her, for the sake of the country. And God save that whole country for her own sake, and the sake of the world. For to save her, is to save the world; and to lose her, is to lose the world.

It needs only a short pilgrimage through the old world to excite such sentiments as these in the heart of a Massachusetts American. And his prayer to God will be, that he may live to go back...

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...and labor harder than he has ever done, to build up the cause of pure religion, of learning, and of freedom, in that land which he has now learnt to be the only one on earth where, for the present, this indissoluble trio of noble institutions has any chance of wide-spread success. And if this man learns only this lesson by his foreign tour, it is worth all the sacrifice and expense of ten thousand miles of voyage and travel.

What a noble work, then, is committed to our hands! What an inviting field has the Home Missionary Society before it! The man who enters it finds society not only in a state more favorable for casting in the leaven of the gospel, but that the influence of his labors is felt almost to the ends of the earth. Let him be laboring to build up some obscure waste place, say in Massachusetts. He may seem to be unnoticed and neglected. But he is doing his part towards sustaining and perpetuating the free and the religious institutions of the country, and therefore, in fact, the eyes of many millions in Europe are watching his labors with deep interest, and with earnest prayers for his fidelity: for their chief hope of the world’s emancipation rests on the success of civil and religious liberty here. And if the true gospel be not preached and received among us, free institutions must for the present fail. In preaching the gospel, therefore, in the obscurest nook of the land, a man may feel that he is working for the whole country, nay, for the whole world. Indeed, Providence is sending representations from the whole world to our doors. By multitudes they pour in upon us from...

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...every European land, and swarms of Asiatics are crowding into the valleys of California. So that in fact we may become missionaries to Papists, Mohammedans, Boodists and other heathen, without leaving our own shores.

What responsibility, then, attaches to the name and position of an American. When, in foreign lands, I have met kings and queens, dukes and marquises, counts and viscounts, they appeared to be men and

women of only the ordinary stature; but when I first set my foot again upon our own shores, and met free-born Christian Americans, it seemed to me that I was looking upon giants, because God has given them the power of giants to bear up the pillars of freedom, of education, and of religion, and to cast down the pillars of ignorance, superstition and despotism.

If your patience is not quite exhausted, allow me to add one or two further suggestions, growing out of a scientific view of the text.

In order that leaven should operate effectually, or even operate at all, it must itself be in an active condition and of a proper temperature. In proportion as its thermometric state is too high or too low, or if there be an admixture of inert substances, or its own decomposition be slow or partial, will its catalytic power be diminished.

So it is with the moral leaven of the gospel. If its purity be marred by an admixture of error and vain speculation, or if it be cast into the community distorted by ignorance, or disfigured and blackened by the fires of fanaticism, or enveloped in the ice of formalism, feeble will be its influence, if indeed it...

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...do not become a nuisance. Instead of proving the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation, men will see in it only the weakness of human wisdom and strength, overpowered by the superior might of human depravity.

Now it is this perverted and deficient gospel, that too often finds its way into our waste places, into our new settlements, and among the floating population of our cities. It has the name of Christianity, and usually contains some truth, but a larger proportion of error; so that while it produces traces of religion, it shows more of fanaticism, or bigotry, or self-righteousness and formalism. How important then, that into fields, thus grown over with briars and weeds, a pure and holy gospel should be carried by pure and holy men. Those engaged in sending this gospel abroad, through our Home Missionary Societies, should have their piety in that active condition, without which their prayers, example and efforts, will only deepen the spiritual slumbers of ignorance and sin. And still more important is it, that the direct agents in this work should preach an unadulterated gospel, not only by their voices but by their lives.

Finally, astonishing as is the power of leaven to change the mass into which it is cast, there is a limit to that power. One part may, indeed, transform two thousand parts of the meal; but if the latter be increased much beyond that proportion, not only will all the excess remain unaffected, but it will operate to prevent the leaven from producing its full effect. Nay, it may nearly or quite destroy that effect. Hence if the leaven and the mass to...

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...be leavened be enormously disproportionate, the best leaven may become powerless.

Now to apply this principle to Home Missionary efforts, I fear, my brethren, that this is just what we are doing in our country. The mass to be leavened by the gospel is out of all proportion to the means employed. In 1850 we built between four and five thousand miles of railroad at an average cost of \$50,000 per mile. During that same year we expended only enough upon domestic missions, to construct five miles of railway. And railways are only one branch of American enterprise out of many. How exceedingly small, then, must be the proportion of our pecuniary means devoted to an enterprise

which transcends all others in our country in importance. For if that fail, all others will be smitten with a deadly blight. Irreligion cannot triumph without trampling in the dust our systems of general education, of public enterprise and freedom, and crushing the hopes of liberty through the earth. Our hopes, therefore, must centre in the Home Missionary cause. We make enormous outlays, and labor without weariness to advance our worldly schemes, and that, too, where the means employed have little or none of the catalytic power inherent in the gospel; and where the results bear no proportion in importance to the work of Home Missions. God has committed to American Christians the noblest enterprise which he has given to the present generation in any part of the world. And he has put into our hands an instrument with which to accomplish it, a thousand times more efficacious than those employed in commerce, in man-...

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...ufactures, in agriculture, or indeed any ordinary art or pursuit. How dwarfed must be our piety, how low our standard of patriotism, how contemptible our philanthropy, if we do not supply the means necessary to prevent the leaven of the gospel from being overpowered and neutralized by ignorance and depravity. Ought we to be satisfied to expend \$50,000,000 annually for railways, and only one thousandth part as much in working out the grandest problem in politics, in education and religion, of this generation! Oh, if any cause has motives powerful enough to rouse men to action, it is this. If we enter into the work resolutely and cheerfully, with humble reliance on God's help, we are sure of success. And success will bring such a day of brightness and blessing to this wide continent, as never yet has visited any other. Though the deluge of ignorance, despotism and false religion, should engulf every other land, ours shall stand high above the flood and beat back its angry waves; and, ere the close of the present century, one hundred millions of Christian freemen shall here be found richly enjoying those social, political, educational, and religious rights and privileges, which God originally gave, but which man has hitherto unrighteously withheld.

Delivered

Boston, March 25, 1852