

right to live—according to your own corrupt wills and appetites, but according to the will of him who has bought you. Strive in all things to “glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”^a “Remember that Christ hath once “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust;” and why? “that he might bring us to God.”^b Remember, “that he died for all, that they which live “should not henceforth live unto themselves, but “unto him that died for them.”^c

Allow me yet once again to ask you, do you really believe the great truths which have formed the subject of this discourse? Are you really and thoroughly persuaded, that the eternal Son of God died upon the cross to save you from everlasting death? And do you not feel thankful to him? But if you feel thankful, deeply and heartily thankful, as I hope you do, endeavour to show your thankfulness not with your lips only, but in your lives, by giving up yourselves to God’s service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all your days. Pray earnestly to God so to impress these things upon your heart, that they may induce you to lead a holy and religious life, that they may be the means of making you, what Christ’s death was intended to make you, “a peculiar people, ‘zealous of good works.’”

^a 1 Cor. vi. 20.^b 1 Peter iii. 18.^c 2 Cor. v. 15.

SERMON IV.

ON A FUTURE JUDGMENT.

2 Cor. v. 10.

We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

OUR blessed Lord, having finished on earth the work which his Father gave him to do; having by his death made atonement for our sins, and opened unto us the gates of everlasting life by his glorious resurrection; in the sight of many of his chosen followers ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, and there SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. He will not, however, always continue there. The Scriptures repeatedly assure us that he will come again from heaven, and that the object of his coming will be to judge the world. “God hath appointed a day “in which he will judge the world in righteousness “by that man, whom he hath ordained, whereof “he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he “hath raised him from the dead.”^a Accordingly in the Creed, after professing our belief that our Lord ON THE THIRD DAY ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD, AND ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, we say, FROM

^a Acts xvii. 31.

THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD.

The doctrine of a future judgment is so calculated to produce holiness of living, that I wish to direct to it your serious attention. In discoursing on this awful subject, we will consider, First, some of the circumstances of solemnity which will attend the last judgment; Secondly, what we shall be judged for; and, Thirdly, the consequences of the sentence that will be pronounced.

I. Some belief in a future judgment appears to have prevailed pretty generally among men, even before the coming of our Lord; and still I believe prevails among nations on whom the light of the Gospel has not yet shined; or where, if it ever shone, it has again been put out in obscure darkness. This belief may have been handed down by unbroken tradition from the time of Noah, or may perhaps have been discovered by the native workings of the mind of man and the suggestions of human reason. Wherever there exists any idea of the difference between right and wrong, and at the same time any belief in a God, in a wise and just Supreme Ruler of the world, it was perhaps natural for those who held such belief to conclude, that he would make a distinction between those who acted well, and those who acted ill; that he would punish the one, and reward the other. And since they could not but perceive, that this distinction was oftentimes not made in this life; that *here* the comparatively good were sometimes reduced to a state of affliction and suffering, while the wicked and ungodly were in seeming prosperity; it was perhaps natural for them to conclude farther, that there would be a future state, in which this distinction would be made; that there would be a future judgment, which would assign to each man his condition according as his conduct in this life had been

good or evil. It may have been natural to conclude thus much from the faint records of tradition, or from the weak exertions of unassisted human reason. Whether that reason would of itself have been able to discover this great truth, it is not necessary for us to inquire; for we are no longer left to such feeble guides, but are assured of the certainty of a last judgment by the constant tenor and clear revelation of the Holy Scriptures. They assure us, that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness;"^b when he "will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."^c They tell us, that a day is coming, when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God;^d when the sea shall give up the dead that were in it, and death and hell (the place of departed spirits) shall deliver up the dead that were in them, and they shall be judged every man according to his works. They tell us, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."^e A multitude of other passages assert or allude to the same awful event: and many set forth in most expressive terms some of the tremendous circumstances with which this event will be accompanied. Our Saviour tells us, in St. Matthew, that "the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels;"^f and, in St. Luke, that "the Son of Man shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."^g St. Paul informs us, that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them

^b Acts xvii. 31.

^c 2 Cor. v. 10.

^e Ecclesiastes xii. 14.

^f Matt. xvi. 27.

^d Rev. xx. 12, 13.

^g Luke ix. 26.

“that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”^h And again, “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God,” which shall awaken the dead, and raise them out of their graves: but “the dead in Christ shall rise first.”ⁱ And in the book of Revelation, St. John, in the spirit of prophecy, represents himself as having actually seen this awful spectacle. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened; which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”^k

The Scriptures, you will recollect, repeatedly tell us, that this event will be accompanied by the destruction of the world, which we now see, and that the instrument, by which this destruction will be accomplished, is fire. We are told, for instance, by St. Peter, that “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.”^l

My friends, let me here pause while I beg you to reflect, that these are not descriptions of an event in which we have no concern, and which we may hear and read of without interest. We shall all of us be called upon to witness the tremendous scene. You, and I, and all, shall actually witness the destruction of the universe; we shall actually see this earth, with all the works of nature, and of art upon

^h 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.
^k Rev. xx. 11, 12.

ⁱ 1 Thess. iv. 16.
^l 2 Peter iii. 10.

it, its cities, its forests, and its mountains, devoured by the flames, and passing away into nothing. And there is not one among us, whatever his state or condition may be, whether small or great, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, wicked or holy, but must appear before this awful tribunal. And yet we can most of us hear of these things without being affected; or, if we are affected for a time, the impression soon passes away, and our hearts are again given up to this world, as if it were our only portion, our only rest. One reason of this indifference is to be found in our want of reflection upon the nature and judgment to which we shall then be subjected; upon the strict justice, I had almost said the *severity*, with which it will be conducted. Let us proceed, therefore, in the next place, to consider what we shall be judged for.

II. We shall be judged, the text tells us, for the things done in the body; for our behaviour during our continuance on earth; for our actions, words, and thoughts, which, as you have heard, are represented as being recorded in the book of God, that at the last day we may be judged out of those things which are written in the book.

We shall be called to account for our *actions*. Not only will the more daring violations of God's law then be remembered, but all those deeds of darkness, which the hopes of concealment encouraged us to commit, of which we said, no eye shall see us; forgetting that nothing can be concealed from God, that “all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do,”^m and, that the time would come when he would set our misdeeds before him, and our secret sins in the light of his countenance.ⁿ Every unlawful indulgence of appetite, of which we said in

^m Heb. iv. 13.

ⁿ Psalm xc. 8.

our heart, the darkness shall cover it; every secret fraud, and act of deceit, in which we perhaps exulted as an instance of skill and sagacity, and took advantage of the simplicity or credulity of a neighbour; these, and all such as these, shall then be openly published before men and angels; "for, there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known."^o Particularly, if at any time the desire of the applause of men, or the dread of their censure, the fear of their reproaches or laughter, have led us to act contrary to our known duty, our cowardice and shame shall then be openly exposed; for, "who-soever," says our Lord, "shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."^p And not only those actions, which were evidently sinful, but many of those which to outward appearance were good and praiseworthy, will be condemned, when the motives from which they proceeded are revealed. Alms bestowed, and acts of seeming kindness performed, not from a principle of love or obedience to God, or from good-will to man, but from a spirit of ostentation; regularity in the external ordinances of religion proceeding, not from devotion and a sense of duty, but from the desire of human applause, will, by that God who seeth the heart, be found wanting in goodness, and condemned with the rest of the offspring of vanity and pride.

We shall be judged also for our words, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."^q Those, for instance, who have accustomed themselves to the language of cursing, who have been in the habit of calling

^o Luke xii. 2.

^p Mark viii. 38.

^q Matt. xii. 37.

upon God to *damn* their neighbours or themselves, perhaps even their own children, and have died without repentance, will then learn by sad experience how dreadful a thing that damnation is, which they so wantonly called down. As while in the body they delighted in cursing,^r they have cause to fear that cursing will happen unto them, and that they will hear the terrible sentence of—"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Those whose tongues have sown strife and dissension; those who have slandered their neighbours, or who have rejoiced in an opportunity of publishing their sins and imperfections by evil speaking; those who have allowed themselves to vent their anger in railing, and abusive language; those also whose conversation has been the conversation of lasciviousness, who have been guilty of "foolish talking and jesting," designed to excite unchaste imaginations and desires; all these will then have cause to deplore their folly; for, of "every idle word,"^s or, as it has been understood, of every vain and wicked word, "that men shall speak," says our Saviour, "they shall give account in the day of judgment."

We shall be judged too for our thoughts. Our thoughts are oftentimes not entirely in our own power; and many vain and foolish, or even in themselves sinful, imaginations, may enter our minds against our wills. These, inasmuch as they arise without our consent, will not, we trust, be imputed to us, by a God of mercy, as actual sins. But, every wilful deliberate wicked thought; every scheme of iniquity, which we have devised, without being able to practise it; every fraud or stratagem for overreaching another which we have planned, though without being able to carry it into effect; every actual intention to gratify some sin-

^r Psalm cix. 17.

^s Matt. xii. 36.

ful lust, to the accomplishment of which nothing but opportunity has been wanting; nay, farther, every unchaste imagination, every uncharitable thought which we have wilfully cherished in secret, will, by that God who spieth out all the thoughts and purposes of the heart, be classed with actual sins.

And not only will our sins of commission, those in which we have done that which we ought not to have done, be remembered against us, but our sins of omission also, the leaving undone what we ought to do, are recorded in the book of God's remembrance. Indeed, it is upon the performance or the non-performance of *duties*, particularly of the duties of brotherly kindness, that our Saviour represents the last sentence to depend. We shall have to account for every instance in which we have perversely withholden good from our brother to whom it was due, when it was in the power of our hand to do it; for every neglect of a reasonable opportunity of promoting his worldly comfort, or his eternal welfare. We shall have to answer for every occasion of advancing the glory of God among men, which we have carelessly omitted to improve; and for our wilful neglect of the means of grace, such as reading and hearing the word of God, such as prayer, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

III. It remains, in the third place, that we say a few words on the sentence that will be pronounced. What this will be, we are told by our Lord himself. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also 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 ever-

"lasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."^t As the blessedness of the righteous, so also the punishment of the wicked will last for ever. What the exact nature of this punishment will be, we perhaps do not know; and in speaking of it, I will not venture to say any thing but what is said in Scripture. St. John, in the Revelations, describes the place of punishment as being a "lake of fire."^u Our blessed Lord represents it by "outer darkness," "where is" "weeping and gnashing of teeth;"^x and with a most awful and impressive repetition, three times in one chapter, speaks of it as a place in which "their worm dieth not, and the fire never shall be quenched."^y

In one of these states, my friends, will every one of us be fixed, by the judgment of the last day. That sentence will place each of us in a state of unspeakable blessedness which will last for ever, or in a state of misery and despair which will never have an end.

If we really believe these things; if we really believe that our Lord, who is now at the right hand of God, will from thence "come to judge both the quick and the dead," would it not be wise in us to prepare for the last judgment, while we yet have time? Is it wise in us ever to be undmindful of the awful account which we must one day give? We, the ministers of the Gospel, remind you of these solemn truths, not for the sake of exciting an useless alarm, but in order to save you from the sentence of condemnation. "Knowing the terror of the Lord we" try to "persuade men,"^z to repent of and forsake their sins, and seek for pardon through the merits of our Redeemer. Judge, therefore, yourselves, brethren, that ye be not

^t Matt. xxv. 34, 41, 46. ^u Rev. xx. 15. ^x Matt. viii. 12, &c.
^y Mark ix. 44, 46, 48. ^z 2 Cor. v. 11.

judged of the Lord. If we would "not be condemned in that fearful judgment, we must accuse and condemn ourselves for our own faults" now, and strive, through the aid of the Holy Spirit, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, even the fruit of a holy and religious life. And let us remember for our encouragement, that the Being who will then come in great glory to judge the world, is he who once came in great humility to save the world. Our Judge is one who took our nature upon him, who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as we are,^a and who died to save us from condemnation. Although we have sinned, "yet we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."^b If we will but repent and believe, our Judge himself becomes our Advocate. "Let us therefore return unto him, who is the merciful receiver of all true penitent sinners; assuring ourselves that he is ready to receive us, and most willing to pardon us, if we come unto him with faithful repentance; if we submit ourselves to him, and from henceforth walk in his ways; if we will take his easy yoke and light burden upon us, to follow him in lowliness, patience, and charity, and be ordered by the governance of his Holy Spirit; seeking always his glory, and serving him duly in our vocation with thanksgiving."^c

^a Heb. iv. 15.^b 1 John ii. 1.^c Commination.

SERMON V.

BELIEF IN GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

2 Cor. xiii. 14.

The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

IN his affectionate farewell to the Church at Corinth, St. Paul expresses his wish or prayer, that the "communion of the Holy Ghost might be with them all." He could have expressed for them no kinder wish; and it accordingly has been adopted as the conclusion of our ordinary Church Service, and of most of our forms of domestic devotion. The communion or fellowship of the Holy Ghost, in other words, the being continually assisted by him, is of absolute necessity to the salvation of our souls. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," says St. Paul, "he is none of his,"^a and those who belong not to Christ, must be left to perish in outer darkness.

Important, however, as this doctrine is, it has not, I fear, its due influence in the world. Some men seem disposed to consider all reliance upon the aid of the Holy Ghost as a species of enthusiasm; and others treat it with such total neglect, that if they should be asked, like the imperfect converts at Ephesus, "Have ye received the Holy

^a Rom. viii. 9.