

| | Page. |
|--|-------|
| For Recovery from Sickness | 414 |
| For Resolution to Redeem the Time | 416 |
| On the Return of the Day of One's Birth | 417 |
| At the Close of the Year | 418 |
| For the Blessings of the Year | 419 |
| For a due Improvement of Time | 420 |
| On the Choice of Friends, and the Duties of Friendship | 421 |
| On the Death of Relatives or Friends | 422 |
| For a Preparation for Eternity | 423 |
| On the Last Judgment | 424 |
| The Husband's Prayer | ib. |
| The Wife's Prayer | 426 |
| The Parent's Prayer | 427 |
| For Parents | 428 |
| In Youth | 429 |
| For the Aged | 430 |
| For the Ministers of God's Word and Sacraments | 432 |
| For Magistrates | 433 |
| For Friends and Benefactors | 435 |
| A Paraphrase of the Lord's Supper | 436 |
| Morning Prayer | 437 |
| Evening Prayer | 439 |

DIALOGUE I.

THE SELF-DECEIVER MADE ACQUAINTED WITH
HIMSELF; in a Dialogue between a Minister
and his Parishioner.

Minister. WHEN I saw you last, my friend and neighbour, I told you that love and duty oblige me, besides my public preaching, to watch over my flock, and to instruct them, separately, as far as I am able. We cannot, you know, speak so familiarly in a common sermon, as in private conference; and therefore I entreated you to allow me, now and then, to have a little sober talk with you, when all other matters might for a time be laid aside; and I am now come to claim your promise to give me a patient hearing.

Parishioner. You are welcome, Sir; though, being ignorant and unlearned, I am loth to talk with such a man as you about matters of religion, which I do not well understand; but because you desired it, I could not refuse you.

M. You shall see that I come not to dispute with you, nor to propose to you any needless questions, but merely to help you so to live that you may inherit everlasting life.

P. I have sense enough to know that Christ's ministers must suit their instructions to their hearers. But to tell you the truth, Sir, there are

so many busy fellows who love to meddle with other people's matters, either wishing to draw us to their own opinions, or else to make themselves teachers, and to seem wiser and better than they are, that I was at first unwilling you should trouble me about religion; till I heard how discreetly and how kindly you have spoken to those who have been with you. This made me desirous of seeing you, and I sincerely welcome you to my house.

M. But I have one request to make before we begin; that we may consider ourselves as in the presence of God, and beg his blessing; and that you will not be offended with me if I speak freely, and only seek the salvation of your soul: for it is not flattery that will save souls.

P. God forbid that I should be offended with you for seeking my good; for I know you are wiser than I, and I know, by long experience, that it is nothing but our salvation which you seek.

M. I pray you then tell me in what state of preparation you think yourself for another world; and what do you think would become of you, if you should die this day?

P. God knows what he will do with us all; I know not. But we must hope the best, and put our trust in the mercy of God.

M. No doubt but God knows; but do you think that we may not ourselves know what is our real spiritual state?

P. I think not: we can but only hope well, without being sure. For who can tell the secrets of God?

M. Cannot a man know his spiritual state, if God should tell him?

P. Yes; but God tells nobody his mind.

M. There you are mistaken; for surely you think the Holy Scriptures are God's word; and whatever they tell us, that God tells us.

P. Yes; I cannot deny that.

M. Do you believe that there is another life after this, and that the soul of man goeth either to heaven or hell?

P. Yes; that must not be denied.

M. Since, then, heaven is a place of inconceivable glory, and hell of the most inexpressible misery, do you not think that there must needs be a very great difference between those who go to the former, and those who go to the latter?

P. Yes, no doubt; God is not unjust: he would not take one to heaven, and send another to hell, if they were both alike.

M. Are, then, a godly man and a wicked man so like, that they cannot be known asunder?

P. Nobody knoweth the heart but God.

M. Another cannot infallibly know it further than the life declareth it: but cannot you know your own heart? Cannot you know what you love and what you hate?

P. No doubt but a man may know his own mind.

M. Very good! And you hear the Scriptures read at Church, where there are abundance of promises made to the godly, both for this life and that to come; and terrible threatenings to the ungodly. But who could take any comfort in the promises, if he were not encouraged to hope that they belonged to him?

P. Yet this hope is little more than conjecture.

M. But do you not hear, in 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "examine yourselves whether you be in the faith or

no: prove your own selves: know you not your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Do you think God would bid men try and examine, and prove themselves, if this were impossible?

P. No: certainly we must do our best: but who can tell who are the elect? These are God's secrets.

M. When God converteth sinners, he sanctifieth them; he putteth into them a holy nature, a new mind, and a new will, and turneth them to a new life: and may not all this be known? Did you never hear, 2 Tim. ii. 19. "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal; the Lord knoweth them that are his; and, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity?" When men believe in Christ, and depart from iniquity, then they may know that they are his.

P. I cannot deny, Sir, what you say.

M. But tell me further, have you not read or heard that some are called in Scripture the children of God, and said to have his nature, and his image? and therefore are said to be born again, and born of God, and required to be holy as he is holy? And others are called the children of the Devil, and said to be of him, and to be ruled, as captives, by him, to do his works and will? And dare you think that God and the Devil are so like, as that their image, and nature, and works, and children, cannot be known one from another?

P. I dare not think so. God forbid!

M. And have you not heard in Scripture, that abundant marks are laid down, by which we may know whether we are the children of God or not?

And can you think that they are all laid down in vain?

P. No; none of the word of God is in vain.— But I must confess that I have no such knowledge of myself.

M. I plainly ask you, can you truly say that you have made it the greatest of your care and labour in this world, and left nothing undone which you were able to do, to make sure of everlasting life?

P. I would I could say so; but I confess I cannot: God forgive me, I have had some slight thoughts of these matters now and then; but I never bestowed such serious thoughts, such earnest labour upon them, as you speak of.

M. I pray you tell me, what is it that hindered you?

P. Alas, Sir, many things have hindered me; the cares and business of this world, which have taken up my mind and time; and, also, vain pleasures, the delights of sense, and a daily enjoyment of my prosperity. Something or other has so taken me up, that I had no leisure to think seriously of God, and of my salvation.

M. And do you think you have done well and wisely? Will this course serve your turn for ever? What have you now to show of all the pleasures which sin afforded you?

P. You need not ask me such a question. The pleasure is gone of all that's past; but I am still in hope of more.

M. And how long will that endure which you hope for? Are you sure to live another week, or day, or hour? Are you not sure that an end will come, and may shortly come? And where then

will be all your delights? Do you think that death is made more safe and comfortable, or more dangerous and terrible, by the remembrance of all the sinful pleasures of a carnal life? Can you comfort a dying man by telling him that he hath had a life of sport and pleasure for so long a time; and that he hath had his good things here; and that this world hath done for him all that it can do, and now he must part with it for ever? Will death be more comfortable to the rich who is clothed in purple and silk, and fareth sumptuously or deliciously every day, than to Lazarus who waiteth in patient poverty for a better life?

And as for all your possessions and wealth, what will they do for you? They may be the fuel of your transitory delights; but will you carry any of them with you? Will they make your death more safe or easy? Or do you not know, that unsanctified wealth and pleasure leave nothing but their sting behind, and prepare us for everlasting woe?

P. I know all this: and yet this world hath a wonderful power to blind men's minds, and turn their thoughts from better things.

M. It is true with those that have not spiritual wisdom, or holy inclination, to mind God or any thing truly good. But if men were wise, would the pleasures of the flesh, which are but for a moment, be preferred before holy everlasting pleasures? or could a life that is hastening so speedily to its end, make men forget an endless life?

But tell me, neighbour, did you not know that you must certainly die? And did you not know, that when death cometh, time is for ever gone, and all the world cannot recall it? Did you not know,

that our business in this world is to prepare for heaven, and to do all that can be done for our everlasting happiness?

P. I have heard all this, but it was with a negligent and careless mind; it did not stir me up to sober consideration, because I hoped still for longer life.

M. But you know that the longest life must have an end. Where now are all that lived before us? And, alas! what are an hundred years when they are gone? What now is all your time that is past? But tell me further, what saith your conscience? Did it never remind you of the end of all your prosperity, and of your soul's appearing in another world? Do you not pass through the church-yard, and see the graves, and tread upon the dust of those that have lived in the pleasures of the world before you? Have you not seen the graves opened, and the remains of your neighbours left there in the silent darkness, to moulder into dust? Have you not seen the bones and relics of your forefathers? And did you not know that all this must be your own condition? And is such a life better than heaven? And such a corruptible body fit to be pampered with all the care and labour of our lives, whilst our souls are neglected and almost forgotten?

P. God forgive us, we forget all this, though we have daily and hourly remembrancers, till death is just upon us, and then we perceive our folly. I was once sick, and like to die, and then I was troubled for fear of what would become of me: and I fully resolved to amend my life: but when I was recovered, all wore off, and the world and the flesh took place again.

M. But you are a man, and have the use of reason. When you confess that you are unprepared to die, and have done no more for your soul, tell me what can induce you to lie down quietly to sleep, when you may die and be past hope before the morning? Are you not afraid in the morning, lest you should die before night, and never more have time of repentance? How can you forget, that if you die in your sins, you must be miserable for ever? Do you not know by what a wonder of providence we live? And dare you wilfully or negligently live one day, unprepared for death in so uncertain a life as this?

P. You say well: but notwithstanding all this uncertainty, I thank God I have lived until now.

M. And will you turn God's patience and mercy into presumption, to the hardening of your heart, and the delay of your repentance? Will he always wait your leisure? Long, indeed, as you have lived, will not death come, and shortly come? And where are you then? Have you ever reflected soberly, what it is for a soul to take its farewell of this world, and to appear in another, to be judged according to our preparation in this life, and to remain in an unchangeable state of happiness or misery for ever?

P. You trouble me and alarm me by these questions: I know that death will not be prevented; but why should we begin our fears too soon? They will come time enough of themselves. The fear of death is a greater pain than death itself.

M. Alas! is dying all that you look at? Though death cannot be prevented, eternal misery may. Dying is a small matter, were it not for what follows. But can future misery be avoided with-

out care and serious diligence? Or had you rather be condemned for ever, than be frightened to your duty, and from your sin and danger? You know, you must live happily or miserably for ever: and you may live in heavenly joys for ever, if you will. And are not these things to be thought of beforehand?

P. Really, Sir, I am afraid if I should set myself to think of another world, and the state of my soul, as seriously as you talk of them, it would frighten me out of my wits. I have seen some people quite melancholy with being so serious about such things; and therefore do not blame me for being afraid of it.

M. God be thanked, that you have yet your reason: and seeing you have it, pray consider the few following questions.

Wherefore did God give you your reason, but to use it in preparing for an endless life?

Hath not that man actually lost his reason, who hath a God to serve, and a soul to save, a heaven to obtain, and a hell to escape, and a death to prepare for, and yet spends his life in worldly vanities, and leaves all this work undone; showing more regard for a little short-lived sensual pleasure, than for endless heavenly glory? You spare no pains to avoid shame, and poverty, and sickness; and will do nothing to avoid everlasting shame and misery.

But further, what is there in God, in Christ, in heaven, or in a holy life, that should make a man melancholy to think of them? I beseech you, neighbour, consider what we are talking of. Is not God a better friend to you than any you have in the world? Do not all men confess that we

should love him above all? And is not the love of God the noblest love, and the source of the highest delight? And do you not think that heaven is a desirable place, and better than this miserable world? If so, why should the hopes of everlasting heavenly joys, and the fore-thoughts thereof, make you sad? Alas! you see we have no other cordial against our calamities in this world but the blessed hopes and prospect of the joys of heaven. If God and heaven be not our first object of regard, for what do we live in this world? And what can support our hearts under all our crosses, but the comfortable thought, that we shall for ever be with the Lord? Take away this, and you destroy our comforts! Our hearts would sink and die within us, instead of being cheered with delightful thoughts of the only good.

P. All this is true if a man were sure of heaven: but when his fears are greater than his hopes, the case is otherwise.

M. You say right: but I pray you consider, that you may most certainly avoid eternal misery, and attain eternal life, if you will but consent to the offers of that Saviour, who will freely save you, from sin now, and sorrow hereafter.

P. I pray you, Sir, tell me then what makes the thoughts of an eternal world so terrible to us? and what makes so many who are troubled in conscience, so melancholy and wretched?

M. Various are the causes which may be assigned: worldly crosses; bodily disease; the remembrance of sins past; the fear of God's justice, and a weak faith in his mercy through Christ. But some minds are distracted by a diversity of opinions in religion; and oftentimes, by falling into

the hands of weak and insufficient teachers, unable to establish in them a sure ground of hope, in the mercies of the Gospel and the merits of its all-gracious Author.

P. Having said enough to convince me that I must not, for fear of the trouble, cast away the thoughts of my soul and eternity, you will, I hope, Sir, help to guide my thoughts, or I can do nothing with them.

M. When a sinner, who has lived ignorantly, carelessly, and sinfully, for a long time, comes at last, by the mercy of God, to see his misery, it cannot be expected that he should immediately be acquainted with all those great truths which he never seriously considered before. He is like a man who hath a way to go which he never went, and a book to learn which he never before saw: he is like a man who has long been confined in a dungeon, where he has only candle light; who, when he first cometh into the open world, and seeth the sun, is astonished at the change; but must have time, before he can be acquainted with the things and persons which he never saw before. Long ignorance will not be cured at once: and darkness is naturally the parent of fear. But time, and patience, and divine light, will overcome them both.

But now, to direct your thoughts, as you desire me, I think that the next thing you have to do, is, to look into your heart, and look back upon your life, in order to resolve this question, whether you are yet a truly converted sinner, and are reconciled to God? Whether, if you should die this night, you think you should be saved or not?

P. God knows: but I hope well: for no man must despair.

M. As for your hoping well, I must tell you, that there is such a thing as hoping against hope. To a repenting believer, God promiseth forgiveness and salvation: and such a one may reasonably hope for it, and God will never disappoint his hopes: but to unbelievers, ungodly, impenitent persons, their own deceitful hearts alone falsely promise forgiveness and salvation.

You do not think, then, surely, that if all men should hope to be saved, this hope would save them?

P. No; but yet there is some comfort in hoping well.

M. True; but is this to hope well? is hope to be saved, in such a condition, in which God saith, that no man shall be saved? is not this to hope that God's word is false? and should a man hope that God will act contrary to his word?

P. But may we not hope, that God will be better than his word? There is no harm in that.

M. That which you call better is not better, but worse. For where then were the justice of God? What is the law made for, but to be the rule of the subject's life, and of the judge's sentence, and to tell men what they must expect? A righteous governor must rule according to his laws, or else he deceives men by them; which is not to be imputed to God, who will never falsify his word.

P. Yet surely the king may pardon an offender.

M. God, it is true, being merciful, hath given us a Saviour, and by him the pardon of our of-

fences: but not absolutely: he pardoneth us by an act of oblivion, a pardoning law: but this law maketh our faith and true repentance (or conversion) the condition of pardon. God holds forth pardon to all the world, if they will but receive it thankfully on his terms, and cease their rebellion, and return to him: but he hath resolved, that they who continue to refuse this pardon and mercy, shall be doubly punished; first for their common sins, and then for their base unthankfulness and contempt of mercy. It is, therefore, foolishness for any one to say, I hope God will forgive me, and be better than his word. He hath already forgiven you, if you repent and turn to him: but if you will not, it is impudence at the same time to refuse forgiveness, and yet to hope for it; to despise mercy, and say, I hope for mercy.

It is impious to say, that God can be actually reconciled to ungodly souls, and take them into his favour and his kingdom. It is a thing impossible, and a contradiction, for a man to be forgiven and saved, who is unholy and unconverted.

P. I understand these things better than I did; but I cannot help thinking, that your language may tend to drive men to despair.

M. You are greatly mistaken; I am driving you *from* despair. There is no hope of the salvation of a sinner who continues unconverted: everlasting despair will be the portion of all who die unconverted and un sanctified; and this is the state from which I am desirous to keep you.

Suppose you met a man riding post towards York, thinking he is in the way to London, and telling you, "I ride for life, and must be at London at night." You would tell him that he must turn

back again then; and that the further he goes, the further he will be from his purpose: and suppose he should answer you, "I hope, truly, I have not lost all this time, and travel; I hope I may come this way to London." Will not you tell him that his hopes will deceive him? that there is no hope of his reaching London that way, but must needs turn back? And if he should reply, "You would drive me to despair; I will hope well and go on;" what would you say to this man? Would you not take him for a fool or a madman?

So say I to you: if you are out of the way to heaven, you must despair of ever coming thither, till you turn. Changing false for sound hopes, is not despair, which is casting away all hope. There is nothing hinders men from repenting and being saved, more than hoping to be saved without true repentance: for who, while he hopes he is right and safe already, will ever return to God?—Every wise man must have some ground and reason for his hope: and should a man's everlasting state be trusted to unsound and uncertain hopes?

P. No, certainly, if we can have better.

M. Tell me, then, what are the grounds and reasons of your hope? Heaven is not for all men. What have you to show, that will prove your title to it?

P. I ground my hope on the great mercy of God.

M. But God's mercy saveth none, but the truly penitent. It is the refusal and abuse of mercy that condemns men. The question then is, whether this mercy will save you?

P. I place my hope in Jesus Christ, who is my Saviour.

M. But Christ saveth not all men. What hope have you that he will save you more than others?

P. Is it not said, that he is the Saviour of all men, and that he is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world?

M. Yes; through his sacrifice pardon is made possible to all men; but till they believe and repent, they are not actually pardoned. Though a physician may undertake to cure all the patients who will trust him and take his remedies; yet all may die, who will not trust him and be ruled by him.

P. But I do believe in Christ, and believers are forgiven.

M. If you truly believe, you have good reason for your hopes; but I am afraid lest you should be mistaken in so great a business. I must first tell you, therefore, what true believing is. Every true believer doth believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And he believeth all God's word to be true; and he heartily consents, that God be his only God, and that Christ be his only Saviour, and the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier; and he trusts himself wholly to God for happiness and salvation. Do you do this?

P. I believe in God, and trust in him.

M. I hope you do; but let me ask you, Do you believe that, without repentance, conversion, and holiness, none can be saved, and see God? and that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his? If you do not, you have not a true and sincere faith.

Do you consider the love of God and the glories of heaven to be your happiness; trusting to nothing in this world, neither health, life, wealth, nor plea-

sure, for your only comfort and your supreme content?

Do you desire and trust that Christ will save you from all your sins, and will teach you the will of God; and that he will sanctify you by the Holy Ghost, that you may live a spiritual life in the love of God, and mortify all fleshly desires; and that you may be exalted and advanced to the greatest degree of Christian holiness?

P. I really think it difficult to answer these questions.

M. You may know, whether you believe and trust in God and Christ, or not, if you will consider the following particulars:

You must trust in God as your Lawgiver and Ruler; and you must trust in Christ, to justify and save you from your sins; and you must trust in the Holy Ghost, to illuminate, sanctify, and quicken you, and, by degrees, to make you perfectly holy, as far as human nature will admit. These are the things for which God is to be trusted.

To believe in God, is to believe his word: and if you believe the word of God, you must believe that he will save converted believers, and condemn all the ungodly and unbelievers?

Belief and trust in God will be seen in their effects. A man cannot truly believe that he shall have a life of joy in heaven for ever, if he lives a carnal and worldly life. It is impossible truly to believe that the wicked shall be turned into hell; and yet go on still in wickedness.

P. I cannot deny that what you say is plain truth.

M. Suppose you were sick, and only one physician could cure you and he offered to do it freely,

if you would trust your life to his skill and care; and some gave out that he was but a deceiver, and not to be trusted; while others tell you, that he never failed where he undertook to heal. If you trust him, you will commit yourself wholly to his care, and follow his counsel, and take his medicines, and forsake all others: but if you distrust him, you will neglect him; and if any should say, "I trust this physician with my life," and yet will take neither his advice nor his medicines, would you not count him mad, that looked for a cure by such a trust?

P. I confess this helps me better to understand what trusting in God and believing in Christ is. I fear many say, they trust in him, who keep their sins, and hold fast the world, and never think of forsaking all for the hopes of heaven.

But I thought, Sir, that this command of forsaking all, and taking up our cross, had been spoken only to such as lived in times of persecution, when they must deny Christ or die; and not to us, who live where christianity is professed. God forbid, that none should be saved but martyrs!

M. So say I: but you are to be told, that it is the law of Christ, that we deny ourselves, and forsake all things and persons that would prove an hinderance to our salvation, and even take up the cross, if required, and follow him, or else we cannot be his disciples. *Matt. x. 37.* And do not all that are baptized, promise and vow to forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to take God for their only God? But you cannot renounce this world as you have promised, unless you love God and heaven better than the world.