

SERMONS

BY THE

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PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

WITH A

FUNERAL SERMON BY THE REV. SAMUEL FINLEY, B. D.,

HIS SUCCESSOR IN THAT OFFICE,

AND SOME ACCOUNT OF PRESIDENT DAVIES, BY THE REV. THOMAS

GIBBONS, D. D., OF LONDON, AND THE REV. DAVID

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CONTAINING ALSO

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BY THE

REV. WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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SERMON XXVI.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AND THEIR CONSEQUENT JOYS AND BLESSINGS.

ISAIAH liii. 10, 11.—*When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.*¹

THIS chapter contains a most lively and moving account of very tragical sufferings; and, if we have but a small share of humanity, we cannot hear it without being affected, even though we did not know the person concerned. Here is one so mangled and disfigured, that he has no form nor comeliness; one despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; one wounded, bruised, oppressed, afflicted; one brought as a lamb to the slaughter; one cut off out of the land of the living. And who is he? Were he an enemy, or a malefactor, we could not but pity him. But this was not his character; “for he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” And he was so far from being our enemy, that “he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities,” not for his own. Were he a child or a friend that had suffered such things, it would raise all our mournful and sympathizing passions to hear the history. But what if this should be *the man that is God’s fellow*, the Redeemer, to whom we are bound by the most endearing obligations! a person of infinite dignity and perfect innocence, our best friend, and only Saviour! What if it should be he? Would not this move your hearts, and raise all your tender passions? Or shall he die in such agonies unpitied, unlamented, unbeloved, when even a dying criminal excites our compassion? What do you think would be the issue, if I should make an experiment of this today? If I should make a trial, what weight will the *sufferings* of Jesus have upon your hearts? Do you think the representation of his sufferings and love would have any effect upon you? That they may have this effect, is my design in the prosecution of this subject; for that it is Jesus who is the hero of this deep tragedy, or the subject of these sufferings, we may learn from the frequent application of passages quoted from this chapter to him in the New Testament. This chapter has been a suc-

¹ 1 The sermon is dated Hanover, (a county in Virginia,) July 11, 1756; and is evidently a Sacramental Discourse.

cessful part of the Scriptures, and there are some now in heaven who were brought thither by it. This is the chapter the Ethiopian eunuch was reading, when he asked Philip, “Of whom speaketh the, prophet this? of himself, or some other man?” and Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus: and he believed with all his heart and was baptized; and went on his way homeward (and heavenward) rejoicing. Acts viii. 32, 35. This was the chapter that opened to the penitent Earl of Rochester the way of salvation through the sufferings of Christ, which alone relieved his mind from the horrors of guilt, and constrained him to hope that even such a sinner as he might find mercy. Oh! that it may have the same effect upon you, my brethren, today, that with the eunuch you may return home rejoicing!

The design and method I now have in view, is only to illustrate and improve the several parts of my text, especially those that represent how pleasing and satisfactory the conversion and salvation of sinners, by the death of Christ, is to him.

1. “When² thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.”³ An offering for sin is when the punishment of sin is transferred from the original offender to another, and that other person suffers in his stead. Thus the Lord Jesus was made a sin-offering for us. The punishment of our sin was transferred to him, and he bore it in his own body on the tree. He became our substitute, and took our place in law, and therefore the penalty of the law due to us was executed upon him. It is in this, my brethren, that we have any hope of salvation: blood for blood, life for life, soul for soul: the blood, the life, the soul of the Son of God, for the blood, and life, and soul of the obnoxious criminal. Here, sirs, your grateful wonder may begin to rise upon our first entrance on the subject; and you will find the wonders will increase as we go along.

You see Jesus presented an offering for sin; and what was it he offered? “Silver and gold he had none,” the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of heifers, would not suffice; and these too he had not. But he had blood in his veins, and that shall all go; that he will offer up to save our guilty blood. He had a soul, and that was made an offering for sin. *His soul an offering for sin!* his pure, spotless soul! his soul that was of more value than the whole universe beside! You may find those that will give a great many things for the deliver-

² The particle here rendered *when* is more generally rendered *if*; and then the sentence will read thus: “If thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,” the consequence will be, that “he shall see his seed,” &c.

³ Or “when thou shalt make his soul sin.” It is a common Scripture phrase, whereby a sin-offering is called sin. And it is sometimes retained in our translation, particularly in 2 Cor. v. 21. “He hath made him to be sin;” that is, a sin-offering for us, &c.

ance of a friend, but who would give his soul! his soul for his enemies!—this is the peculiar commendation of the love of Jesus.

His soul here may signify his whole human nature; in which sense it is often taken in the Sacred Writings. And then the meaning is, that both his soul and body, or his whole human nature, bore the punishment due to us. Or his soul may be here understood properly for his rational and immortal part, in opposition to his body; and then the meaning is, that he suffered in soul as well as in body. His soul suffered by the foresight of his suffering; by the temptations of the devil; by an affecting view of the sins of men; and especially by the absence of his heavenly Father. Hence, when his body was untouched, in the garden of Gethsemane, he cries out, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;” and elsewhere, “Now is my soul troubled.” In short, as one expresses it, the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings. The sense of bodily pain may be swallowed up in the pleasing sensations of divine love. So some have found by happy experience, who have suffered for righteousness’ sake. But Jesus denied himself that happiness which he has given to many of his servants. His soul was sorrowful, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and all this for such sinners as we. And shall this have no weight among the creatures for whom he endured all this? Make an experiment upon your hard hearts with this thought, and try if they can resist its energy, “Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.” Thou shalt make; that is, thou, the great God and Father of all. This sacrifice is provided by thy wisdom and grace, and appointed by thy authority, who hast a right to settle the terms of forgiveness; and therefore we may be sure this sacrifice is acceptable; this atonement is sufficient. This method of salvation is thy contrivance and establishment, and therefore valid and firm. Here, my brethren, is a sure foundation; here, and nowhere else. Can you produce a divine warrant for depending on your own righteousness, or anything else? No; but this offering for sin is of divine appointment, and therefore you may safely venture your eternal all upon it. “Come, ye afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted;” come, build upon this rock, and you shall never fall.

Or the words may be rendered, “When his soul shall make an offering for sin.”⁴ And in this sense it is signified that this was Christ’s own voluntary act. He consented to the arduous undertaking; he consented to be our substitute, and offered himself a sacrifice for us. He was under no previous constraint;

⁴ The reason of this ambiguity, is, that the original word is the second person masculine, and the third person feminine. If taken in the masculine gender, it must be applied to God the Father; if in the feminine, to the soul of Christ, which is also feminine.

subject to no compulsion. This he tells us himself: "No man taketh my life from me; but I lay it down of myself." John x. 18. Thus it was his own free choice; and this consideration prodigiously enhances his love. A forced favour is but a small favour. But Jesus willingly laid down his life when he had power to keep it. He voluntarily ascended the cross, when he might have still continued on the throne. He was absolute Lord and proprietor of himself, under no obligations to any, till he assumed them by his own consent. When martyrs have died in the cause of righteousness, they did but what was their previous duty; their lives were not theirs, but his who gave them, his to whom they devoted them; and they had no right to them when he demanded them; nor were they able to protect them against the power of their enemies. But Jesus resigned what was his own absolute property; and he resigned his life when it was in his power to have retained it. All the united forces of earth and hell could not have touched his life had not he consented. As with one word he spoke them into being, so with a word he could have blasted all their powers, or remanded them into nothing, as he found them. Of this he gave a specimen, when by saying *I am he*, (John xviii. 6,) I am the despised Nazarene whom ye are seeking, he struck an armed company down to the earth; and he could as easily have chained them there, and never suffered them to rise more. Here was love indeed, that he should *offer* himself a voluntary, self-devoted sacrifice! and if he made his soul an offering for sin when he was not obliged to it, will not you voluntarily love and serve him, when you are obliged to it; obliged by all the ties of authority and gratitude, of duty and interest? Let me bring home this overture to your hearts: will you, of your own choice, devote yourselves to his service, who consented to devote himself a victim for your sins? Are you willing to live to him, when you are bound to do it; to him who died for you, when he was not bound to do it? You have the easier task of the two: to live a life of holiness, and to die upon a cross, are very different things; and will you not do thus much for him? Could there be such a thing as a work of supererogation, or an overplus of obedience, methinks this overplus of love might constrain you to it; and will you not so much as honestly attempt that which you are bound to by the most strong and endearing obligations? If you reject this proposal, make no pretensions to gratitude, a regard to the most sacred and rightful authority, or any noble disposition. You are sunk into the most sordid and aggravated degree of wickedness, and every generous and pious passion is extinct within you.

Now, what shall be the consequence, what the reward of all these sufferings of Christ? Shall he endure all this in vain? Shall he receive no compensa-

tion? Yes; for,

2. My text tells you *he shall prolong his days*. The self-devoted victim shall have a glorious resurrection. His days were cut off in the midst; but he rose again, and shall enjoy an endless length of happy and glorious days. That he was once dead he was not ashamed to own, when he appeared in a form of so much majesty to John. “Fear not,” says he, “I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore;” Rev. i. 17, 18. The man that hung on Calvary, and lay dead in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, where is he now? Oh! he has burst the bonds of death, triumphed over the grave, and enjoys an immortal life. And this immortal life he spends in a station of the most exalted dignity and perfect happiness for ever. See! Jesus, “who was made a little lower than the angels for the sufferings of death, crowned with glory and honour,” Heb. ii. 9. Because “he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess:” Phil. ii. 8-11. It was for this end that “Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living:” Rom. xiv. 9. By his death he acquired universal government, and has the keys of the vast invisible world, and of death that leads into it; Rev. i. 18. This was a great part of that joy which was set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross, despising the shame; Heb. xii. 2.⁵

And is the poor, despised, insulted, crucified Jesus thus exalted? Then I proclaim, like the herald before Joseph, when advanced to be prime minister to Pharaoh, Bow the knee! submit to him, ye sons of men. He has bought you with his blood, and has a right to your subjection; therefore yield yourselves to him. This day become his willing subjects, and swear allegiance to him at his table. To him let every knee bow in this assembly, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. And do you now feel your hearts begin to yield? Are your souls in the posture of humble homage? Are you ready to say, “Lord Jesus, reign over this soul of mine; see, I resign it as the willing captive of thy cross?” Or will you stand it out against him? Shall your hearts and practices, as it were, send a message after him, now when he is advanced to his heavenly throne,

⁵ This sentence, “He shall prolong his days,” is otherwise translated by some, and applied, not to Christ, but to his seed: “He shall see his seed, who shall prolong their days;” or, “He shall see a long-lived seed,” or, “a long succession of posterity.” So the seventy.—This translation gives a stricter connection and uniformity to the words with the preceding and following sentences. And in this sense it is undoubtedly true; for Jesus has always had, and ever will have, some spiritual children on our guilty globe; and neither earth nor hell shall ever be able to extinguish the sacred race.

“We will not have this man to reign over us?” Then I proclaim you rebels, wilful, inexcusable rebels against the supreme, the most rightful, and the most gracious government of Christ; and if you continue such, you must perish for ever by the sword of his justice, without a possibility of escaping. You cannot rebel against the crucified Jesus with impunity, for he is not now dying on the cross, or lying senseless in the grave. He lives! he lives to avenge the affront. He lives for ever, to punish you for ever. He shall prolong his days to prolong your torment. Therefore, you have no alternative, but to submit to him or perish.

I may also propose the immortality and exaltation of Christ to you, as an encouragement to desponding souls. So the apostle uses it, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth.” Heb. vii. 25. In trusting your souls to him, you do not commit them to a dead Saviour. It is true, he was once dead, above 1700 years ago; but now he is alive; and behold he liveth for evermore. He lives to communicate his Spirit for your sanctification; he lives to look after you in your pilgrimage through this wilderness; he lives to send down supplies to you according to your exigencies; he lives to make perpetual intercession for you (which is the thing the apostle had in view), to plead your cause, to urge your claims founded on his blood, and to solicit blessings for you. He lives for ever to make you happy for ever. And will you not venture to trust your souls in his hand? you may safely do it without fear. He has power and authority to protect you, being the Supreme Being, Lord of all, and having all things subjected to him; and consequently, nothing can hurt you if he undertakes to be your guard. Ye trembling weaklings, would it not be better for you to fly to him for refuge than to stand on your own footing, afraid of falling every hour? He can, he will support you, if you lean upon him.

And does not he appear to you as an object of love in his exalted state? He is all-glorious, and deserves your love; and he is all benevolence and mercy, and therefore self-interest, one would think, would induce you to love him; for to what end is he exalted? Isaiah will tell you, “He is exalted, that he may have mercy upon you.” Isa. xxx. 18. He has placed himself upon his throne, as upon an eminence, may I so speak, that he may more advantageously scatter blessings among the needy crowd beneath him, that look up to him with eager wishful eyes, like the lame beggar on Peter and John, expecting to receive something from them. And shall not such grace and bounty, in one so highly advanced above you, excite your love? Certainly it must, unless that the principle of gratitude be lost in your breasts.

Finally, May I not propose the exaltation and immortality of the Lord Jesus, as an object of congratulation to you that are his friends? Friends naturally rejoice in the honours conferred upon one another, and mutually congratulate each other's success. And will not you that love Jesus rejoice with him, that he is not now where he once was; not hanging on a painful and ignominious cross, but seated on a glorious throne; not insulted by the rabble, but adored by all the heavenly armies; not pierced with a crown of thorns, but adorned with a crown of unfading glory; not oppressed under loads of sufferings, but exulting in the fulness of everlasting joys? Must you not rejoice that his sufferings for you had so happy an issue with regard to himself? Oh! can you be sunk in sorrow while your Head is exalted to so much glory and happiness, and that as a reward for the shame and pain he endured for you? Methinks a generous sympathy should affect all his members; and if you have no reason to rejoice on your own account, yet rejoice for your Head; share in the joys of your Lord.

Thus you see Jesus Christ has obtained the richest reward in his own person. But is this all? Shall his sufferings have no happy consequences with regard to others; in which he may rejoice as well as for himself? Yes, for,

3. My text tells you, that *he shall see his seed. He shall see of the travail of his soul*, and shall be satisfied; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. What an emphatical variety of expressions are here to signify the pleasure which Christ takes in observing the happy fruits of his death, in the salvation of many of the ruined sons of men!

He shall see his seed. By his seed are meant the children of his grace, his followers, the sincere professors of his religion. The disciples or followers of a noted person, for example, a prophet or philosopher, are seldom denominated his seed or children. These words are parallel to those spoken by himself, in the near prospect of his sufferings; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John xii. 24. So unless Jesus had fallen to the ground and died, he would have abode alone; he would have possessed his native heaven in solitude, as to any of the sons of Adam; but now by his dying, and lying entombed in the ground, he has produced a large increase. One dying Christ has produced thousands, millions of Christians. His blood was prolific; it was indeed "the seed of the church."⁶ And, blessed be God, its prolific virtue is not yet failed. His spiritual seed have been growing up from age to age, and oh the delightful thought! they have sprung up in this barren soil,

⁶ It was a proverb in the primitive times, that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church;" but never could it be applied with so much propriety as to the blood of Christ.

though, alas! they too often appear thin and withering. These tender plants of righteousness have sprung up in some of your families; and I trust, a goodly number of them are here in the courts of the Lord today. If you search after the root, you will find it rises from the blood of Jesus; and it is his blood that gives it nourishment. Jesus came into our world, and shed the blood of his heart on the ground, that it might produce a crop of souls for the harvest of eternal glory; and without this, we could no more expect it than wheat without seed or moisture. A part of this seed is now ripened and gathered into the granary of heaven, *like a shock of corn come in his season*. Another part is still in this unfriendly climate suffering the extremities of winter, covered with snow, nipt with frost, languishing in drought, and trodden under foot. Such are you, the plants of righteousness, that now hear me. But you are ripening apace, and your harvest is just at hand. Therefore, bear up under the severities of winter; for that coldness of heart, that drought for want of divine influences, those storms of temptations, and those oppressions that now tread you down, will ere long be over. Oh! when shall we see this heavenly seed spring up in this place, in a more extensive and promising degree? When you travel through the country, in this temperate season, with which God has blessed our country that was parched and languishing last year, how agreeable is the survey of wide, extensive fields, promising plenteous crops of various kinds! And oh! shall we not have a fruitful season of spiritual seed among us! May I accommodate the words of Jesus to this assembly, “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest?” John iv. 35. Oh! is the happy season come, when we shall see a large crop of converts in this place? Then welcome, thou long-expected season! But alas! is not this a flattering hope? Is it not, on the other hand, a barren season with us? Is not the harvest past and the summer over, while so many are not saved? Oh! the melancholy thought! If it has been so with us for some time, oh let us endeavour to make this a fruitful day!

We may perhaps more naturally understand this metaphor as taken, not from the seed of vegetables, but that of man; and so it signifies a posterity, which is often called seed. This only gives us another view of the same case. Spiritual children are rising up to Christ from age to age, from country to country; and blessed be his name, the succession is not yet at an end, but will run on as long as the sun endureth. Spiritual children are daily begotten by his word in one part of the world or other; and even of this place it may be said, “that this and that man was born here.” And are there none among you now that feel the pangs of the new birth, and are about to be added to the number of his chil-

dren? Oh that many may be born to him this day! Oh that this day we may feel the prolific virtue of that blood which was shed above 1700 years ago!

He shall see his seed. It is a comfort to a dying man to see a numerous offspring to keep up his name, and inherit his estate. This comfort Jesus had in all the calamities of his life, and in all the agonies of death; and this animated him to endure all with patience. He saw some of his spiritual children weeping around him while hanging on the cross. He looked forward to the end of time, and saw a numerous offspring rising up from age to age to call him blessed, to bear up his name in the world, and to share in his heavenly inheritance. And oh! may we not indulge the pleasing hope, that from his cross he cast a look towards Hanover in the ends of the earth: and that in his last agonies he was revived with this reflection; I see “I shall not die in vain: I see my seed dispersed over the world, and reaching the wilds of America? I foresee that a number of them, towards the end of the world, will meet in Hanover, gratefully to commemorate the sufferings I am now enduring, and devote themselves to me for ever.” O my brethren! will you not afford the blessed Jesus this pleasure? It is but little, very little, for all the tortures he bore for you: your sins have given him many a wound, many a pang, and will you not now grant him this satisfaction? But the cross is not the only place from whence he takes a view of his spiritual seed. He is now exalted to his throne in the highest heavens; and from thence he takes a wide survey of the universe. He looks down upon our world: he beholds kings in their grandeur, victorious generals with all their power, nobles and great men in all their pomp; but these are not the objects that best please his eyes. “He sees his seed;” he sees one here, and another there, bought with his blood, and born of his Spirit; and this is the most delightful sight our world can afford him. Some of them may be oppressed with poverty, covered with rags, or ghastly with famine; they may make no great figure in mortal eyes; but he loves to look at them, he esteems them as his children, and the fruits of his dying pangs. And let me tell you his eyes are upon this assembly today; and if there be one of his spiritual seed among us, he can distinguish them in the crowd. He sees you drinking in his words with eager ears; he sees you at his table commemorating his love; he sees your hearts breaking with penitential sorrows, and melting at his cross. And oh! should we not all be solicitous that we be of that happy number on whom his eyes are thus graciously fixed?

But these are not the only children whom he delights to view; they are not all in such an abject, imperfect state. No, he sees a glorious company of them around his throne in heaven, arrived to maturity, enjoying their inheritance,

and resembling their divine Parent. How does his benevolent heart rejoice to look over the immense plains of heaven, and see them all peopled with his seed! When he takes a view of this numerous offspring, sprung from his blood, and when he looks down to our world, and we hope to this place among others, and sees so many infants in grace, gradually advancing to their adult age; when he sees some, perhaps every hour since he died upon Calvary, entering the gates of heaven, having finished their course of education upon earth; I say, when this prospect appears to him on every hand, how does he rejoice! Now the prophecy in my text is fulfilled. *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* If you put the sentiments of his benevolent heart into language, methinks it is to this purpose, “It is enough; since my death has been so fruitful of such a glorious posterity, I am satisfied. If sinners will submit to me, that I may save them, if they will but suffer me to make them happy, I desire no other reward for all my agonies for them. If this end be but answered, I do not at all repent of my hanging on the tree for them.” O sirs, must not your heart melt away within you, to hear such language as this? See the strength of the love of Jesus? if you be but saved, he does not grudge his blood and life for you. Your salvation would make amends for all. He asks no other reward from you than that you will become his spiritual seed, and behave as children towards him. This he would count the greatest joy; a joy more than equivalent to all the pains he endured for you. And oh! my brethren, will you not afford him this joy today? This is a point I have much at heart, and therefore I must urge it upon you; nay, I can take no denial in it. Jesus has done and suffered a great deal for you; and has gratitude never constrained you to inquire how you can oblige him? or what you shall do for him in return? If this be your inquiry, you have an answer immediately; devote yourselves to his service, love and obey him as his dutiful children, that he may save you. If you would oblige him, if you would give him full satisfaction for all the sorrows you have caused. him, do this; do this or nothing; for nothing else can please him. Suppose he should this day appear to you in that form, in which he once was seen by mortals, sweating great drops of blood, accused, insulted, bruised, scourged, racked upon the cross; and suppose he should turn to you with a countenance full of love and pity, and drenched with blood and tears, and address you in such moving language as this: “See! sinners, see what I suffer for you: see at what a dear rate I purchase your life; see how I love you. And now I have only this to ask of you in return, that you would forsake those murderous sins which thus torment me; that you would love and serve me; and accept of that salvation which I am now purchasing for

you with the blood of my heart; this I ask with all the importunity of my last breath, of bleeding wounds, and expiring groans. Grant me but this, and I am satisfied; I shall think all my sufferings well bestowed." I say, suppose he should address you thus in person, what answer would he receive from this assembly? Oh! would you not all cry out with one voice, "Lord Jesus, thou hast overcome us with thy love: here we consent to thy request. Prescribe anything, and we will obey. Nothing can be a sufficient compensation for such dying love." Well, my brethren, though Jesus be not here in person, yet he makes the same request to you by the preaching of the gospel, he makes the same request by the significant representation of his sufferings, just about to be given by sacramental signs; and therefore make the same answer now, which you would to himself in person. He has had much grief from Hanover ere now: many sins committed here lay heavy upon him, and bruised and wounded him; and oh! will you not afford him joy this day? Will you not give him the satisfaction he desires? His eyes are now running through this assembly, and shall he not see of the travail of his soul? Shall he not see the happy fruits of his death? There is joy in heaven at the conversion of one sinner, and Jesus has a principal share in the joy. And will you endeavour to rob him of it? If you reject his proposal, the language of your conduct is, "He shall have no cause of joy, as far as I can hinder it; he shall, however, have none from me; all his sufferings shall be in vain, as far as I can render them so." And are you not shocked at such blasphemy and base ingratitude? The happiness of his exalted state consists, in a great degree, in the pleasure of seeing the designs of his death accomplished in the conversion and salvation of sinners; and therefore, by denying him this, you attempt to degrade him, to rob him of his happiness, and to make him once more a man of sorrows. And can you venture upon such impiety and ingratitude? I tell you, sirs, it will not do to profess his name, to compliment him with the abnormalities of religion, and to be Christians in pretence, while you do not depart from iniquity, and while your hearts are not fired with his love. He takes no pleasure in seeing such spurious seed, that have no resemblance to their pretended Father; but he will disown them at last, as he did the Jews, and tell them, *Ye are of your father, the devil whose deeds ye do*. John viii. 44. The thing in which he would rejoice, and which I am inculcating upon you, is, that as penitent, helpless sinners, you will cast yourselves entirely upon the merit of his atonement, devote yourselves to his service, and submit to him as your Lord; that is, that you would become true, genuine, sincere Christians. This, and nothing short of this, would afford him pleasure; and can you refuse it to him; especially when it

will afford the greatest pleasure to yourselves? Permit me, my dear brethren, to insist upon it, that you rejoice the heart of the blessed Jesus today. I request you in his name and stead; and to which of you shall I make the request with success? Will you, the free-born descendants of Britons, gratify him in this? Or, if you refuse, Behold I turn to the Gentiles. Some of you, poor negroes, have, I hope, rejoiced the heart of Christ, by submitting to him as your Saviour; and are there no more among you that will do him this kindness? Oh! can any of you bear the thought of refusing? He bore the black crimes of many a poor negro; and now he is looking upon you, to see what return you will make him. Come, then, ye that are at once slaves to men, and slaves to sin, let *the Son make you free, and you shall be free indeed*; he will deliver you from sin and Satan, the word of masters, and bring you into the glorious liberty of his children.

Here I would, for a while, drop my address to the noble principle of gratitude, and endeavour to work upon that of self-love, which, though less noble, is more strong in degenerate creatures. In affording Christ this pleasure, you will afford the greatest pleasure to yourselves; for it is your happiness, your salvation, that he rejoices at, and therefore, in grieving him, you ruin yourselves. Accept of him as your Saviour and Lord, and you shall be happy for ever; but if you reject him, you are for ever undone; he will not save you, and where will you look for a Saviour? To which of the saints, to which of the angels, will you turn? Alas! they all will cast you out if Christ renounces you. If you will not suffer him to rejoice over you in doing you good, he will rejoice over you in doing you evil; he will glorify himself in your destruction; he will please himself in the execution of justice upon you. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright to reflect the splendours of his perfections. But, on the other hand, if you afford him joy at your conversion this day, he will reward you for ever; he will reward you with all the unspeakable joys of heaven.

Here, then, is a twofold cord to draw you to Jesus Christ, the love of Christ and the love of yourselves; and one would think such a cord could not easily be broken. Can any of you resist the united force of gratitude and self-interest? Are you so unnatural as to sin against Christ, and against your own life; to ruin yourselves rather than to oblige him? Who would think that the once noble nature of man should ever be capable of such a degree of degeneracy? And oh! who would have thought that the Son of God would lay down his life, or even entertain one benevolent thought for such base ungrateful creatures, that care so little for him, or even for their own true interest? I must bring this matter to a short issue; and it is this; you must either afford Christ this generous

pleasure, by receiving and submitting to him this day, or you will return home under the additional guilt of rejecting him, and doing all you could to reduce him into misery again; and if you continue such, which, alas! is not improbable, you must feel his eternal resentments, and perish for ever under the weight of his righteous vengeance. Let us now proceed to another part of the text.

The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. It is the pleasure of the Lord that sinners should be saved through the mediation of Jesus Christ; I say, through the mediation of Jesus Christ; for he is determined they shall not be saved in any other way; he is determined that those who refuse to be saved in this way, shall not be saved at all; because their salvation in any other way would not be consistent with the glory of his perfections, the honour of his government, and his character as the supreme Magistrate of the universe; and his honour and glory are of more importance than the happiness of all created worlds; and therefore their happiness cannot be obtained in any way inconsistent with it. But through the mediation of Christ sinners may be saved, and in the meantime the honour of the divine perfections and government secured, and even illustrated. He has made atonement for sin, and answered the demands of the divine law and justice; so that God can now be just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus. Hence *God is in Christ*; observe, in Christ, *reconciling the world to himself*. 2 Cor. v. 19. His heart is set on it; and the success of this scheme affords him the greatest pleasure. It is not only your interest, but your duty to be saved. It is as much your duty to enter into heaven, as to pray, or to perform any other part of religion. And your destruction will not only be your righteous punishment, but your sin; the most criminal self-murder. God has been pleased to interpose his authority, to give greater force to the principle of self-love. Your interest has this additional recommendation, that it is your duty; and you sin against God in ruining yourselves. Here again my subject leads me to address myself to the united principles of gratitude and self-love. Will you not afford the Lord that made you this benevolent pleasure? Will you not gratify him in this, when it is your happiness he seeks? Has neither the pleasure of God nor your own immortal interest any weight with you? Is sin dearer to you than both? Alas! if you are not to be wrought upon by considerations drawn from the love of God, or love to yourselves, from gratitude or self-interest, from what topic shall I reason with you? If this be the case, you are no longer to be dealt with as reasonable creatures, but as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed.

This work of saving sinners, God has entrusted to Jesus Christ: and he has

chosen a very proper person for so grand and difficult an undertaking.

The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, or under his management. He knows how to carry on the scheme to the best advantage. The work has been going on from Adam to this day, in spite of all opposition; and it is not now at a stand. Oh that it may prosper among you, my dear people! Oh that the sacred Trinity, and all the angels on high, may look down with pleasure this day on this guilty spot, rejoicing to see the grand scheme of salvation successfully going on! My brethren, will you not fall in with the design? A design so favourable to yourselves. Will you not all concur to promote it, and carry it into execution upon a child, a friend, a neighbour, and especially upon yourselves? Or will you set yourselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed, by refusing to fall in with this scheme? Will you join in the conspiracy against it with the malevolent powers of hell, who oppose it with all their might, because it tends to your salvation? You readily concur in any scheme for your temporal advantage, and why not in this? Is the happiness of heaven the only kind of happiness that you are careless about? Is the salvation of your immortal soul the only deliverance for which you have no desire? Alas! are you become so stupidly wicked?

This subject affords strong consolation to such of you as have complied with the method of salvation through Christ, since the salvation of sinners in this way is the pleasure of the Lord; and since it is entrusted to the faithful and skillful hands of Christ, under whose management it will prosper, you may be sure his pleasure will be accomplished with respect to you, and that the divine scheme shall be carried into complete execution, in spite of all opposition. Therefore rejoice in your security, and bless his name to whom you owe it.

I shall conclude with a few advices adapted to this solemn sacramental occasion.

The table of the Lord is just about to be spread among us. This is another instance of the grace and benevolence of Christ; for to remember him, who is the design of this ordinance, is not only your duty, but your privilege and happiness. The remembrance of him has virtue in it to refresh your souls, to heal your wounded consciences, and to revive your languishing graces. Hence it is that this ordinance is not only a memorial of Christ, but a feast for your refreshment and support; and consequently his making it a standing ordinance in his church is a standing evidence of his good-will to his people to the end of the world. It is true it is an institution little regarded, even in the Christian world: to many the table of the Lord is contemptible, for they stand by and gaze at it as unconcerned or curious spectators. But this does not depreciate it,

nor is it a reason why you should desert it. Come, ye children, crowd round your Father's table today. Let Jesus see his seed feasting together in commemoration of him, and in mutual love with one another. Let him now see of the travail of his soul, the children with whom he travailed as in birth; let him now see a goodly company of them around his table, that he may be satisfied. Let me remind you that you have caused him many a heavy hour and much pain and sorrow; therefore let him in return have pleasure and satisfaction from you this day.

Oh! rejoice the heart you have often broken, and let there be joy in heaven over you. Let the angels that are ministering to the saints, and that are no doubt hovering unseen over this assembly, viewing those humble memorials of that Saviour whom they behold without a veil in his native heaven, let them carry up glad tidings to their Lord this evening, and tune their harps above to higher strains of joy and praise. And oh! that the lost sheep would this day return, that their kind Shepherd may rejoice over them: he came from heaven in search of you, and will you keep out of his way and fear falling into his hands? Let wandering prodigals return, that there may be joy in your Father's house, whose arms are stretched out to embrace you, and who is looking after you with eager eyes. Oh let the pleasure of the Lord prosper among us this day, and it will be a day gratefully to be remembered to all eternity.

This ordinance is also a seal of the covenant of grace; therefore come to it this day to renew your contract with your God and Saviour; to take him for your God, and to give up yourselves to him as his people, in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten. Make a sure covenant; call heaven and earth, God, angels and men, to be witness to it, and seal it with the memorials of your dying Redeemer. You had need to make it firm, for much depends upon it; and you have much to go through to perform the duties of the Christian life; to conflict with powerful temptations: to die; to stand at the supreme tribunal; these are the things you are to go through; and you cannot pass through them with honour or safety, unless you make sure of an interest in God, and give up your all into his hands.

This institution is also intended to cultivate the communion of the saints; and therefore, as children, you are to sit down at the table of your common Father, with hearts full of ardent love to mankind, and especially to the household of faith. Let no angry or malicious passion pollute this sacred feast; but be all charity and benevolence like that Redeemer whose death you celebrate.

Finally, You are now to renew your vows and obligations to be the Lord's, and to walk in his ways all the days of your life. See that you enter into them

with an entire dependence upon his strength; and oh! remember them afterwards, to carry them into execution. One would think that all traitors would be for ever deterred from sitting down at the Lord's table, by the shocking example of Judas, the first hypocrite that profaned it. And oh! one would think that vows, made in so solemn a posture, and with the emblems of Christ's body and blood in your hands, would not soon be forgotten as trifles. It is, methinks, an exploit of wickedness to be capable of this; and none of you, I hope, are hardy enough to venture upon it.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 The sermon is dated Hanover, (a county in Virginia,) July 11, 1756; and is evidently a Sacramental Discourse.
- 2 The particle here rendered *when* is more generally rendered *if*; and then the sentence will read thus: "If thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin;" the consequence will be, that "he shall see his seed," &c.
- 3 Or "when thou shalt make his soul sin." It is a common Scripture phrase, whereby a sin-offering is called sin. And it is sometimes retained in our translation, particularly in 2 Cor. v. 21. "He hath made him to be sin;" that is, a sin-offering for us, &c.
- 4 The reason of this ambiguity, is, that the original word is the second person masculine, and the third person feminine. If taken in the masculine gender, it must be applied to God the Father; if in the feminine, to the soul of Christ, which is also feminine.
- 5 This sentence, "He shall prolong his days," is otherwise translated by some, and applied, not to Christ, but to his seed: "He shall see his seed, who shall prolong their days;" or, "He shall see a long-lived seed," or, "a long succession of posterity." So the seventy.—This translation gives a stricter connection and uniformity to the words with the preceding and following sentences. And in this sense it is undoubtedly true; for Jesus has always had, and ever will have, some spiritual children on our guilty globe; and neither earth nor hell shall ever be able to extinguish the sacred race.
6. It was a proverb in the primitive times, that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church;" but never could it be applied with so much propriety as to the blood of Christ.