

THE
WORKS
OF
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CONTAINING
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &c., LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA, DISCOURSES
INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT,
SERMONS PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY,
A REVIEW OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, OLNEY HYMNS, POEMS,
MESSIAH, OCCASIONAL SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED
MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, &c.
BY THE REV. R. CECIL, A. M.

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SERMON IV.

ON ALL THINGS BEING GIVEN US WITH CHRIST.

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? Rom. viii. 32.

VARIOUS have been the disputes, and various the mistakes of men, concerning the things of God. Too often, amidst the heat of fierce contending parties, truth is injured by both sides, befriended by neither. Religion, the pretended cause of our many controversies, is sometimes wholly unconcerned in them: I mean, that pure religion and undefiled, that wisdom which cometh from above, abounds with proof of its divine original, being “pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good works, without partiality, and without hypocrisy,” James iii. Religion is a serious and a personal concern. It arises from a right knowledge of God and ourselves; a sense of the great things he has done for fallen man; a persuasion, or at least a well-grounded hope, of our own interest in his favour; and a principle of unbounded love to him who thus first loved us. It consists in an entire surrender of ourselves, and our all to God; in setting him continually before us, as the object of our desires, the scope and inspector of our actions, and our only refuge and hope in every trouble: finally, in making the goodness of God to us the motive and model of our behaviour to our fellow-creatures, to love, pity, relieve, instruct, forbear, and forgive them, as occasions offer; because we ourselves both need and experience these things at the hand of our heavenly Father. The two great points to which it tends, and which it urges the soul, where it has taken place, incessantly to press after, are, communion with God, and conformity to him: and as neither of these can be fully attained in this life, it teaches us to pant after a better; to withdraw our thoughts and affections from temporal things, and fix them on that eternal state, where we trust our desires shall be abundantly satisfied; and the work begun by grace shall be crowned with glory.

Such is the religion of the gospel. This the life and doctrine of our Lord, and the writings of his apostles, jointly recommend. An excellent abridgement of the whole we have in this 8th chapter to the Romans, describing the state, temper, practice, privileges, and immoveable security of a true Christian. Every verse is rich in comfort and instruction, and might, without violence, afford a theme for volumes; particularly that which I have read, may be styled *evangelium, evangelii*: a complete and comprehensive epitome of whatever is truly worthy of our knowledge and our hope. The limits of our time are too narrow to admit any previous remarks on the context, or indeed to consider the subject according to the order of an exact division; therefore, I shall not at present use any artificial method; but, taking the words as they lie, I shall offer a few practical observations, which seem naturally and immediately to arise

from the perusal of them, making such improvement as may occur as I go along. And may the Father of mercies, who has put this treasure into our hands, favour us with his gracious presence and blessing!

I. From the words, "He spared not his own Son," we may observe in one view, the wonderful goodness and the inflexible severity of God. So great was his goodness, that when man was by sin rendered incapable of any happiness, and obnoxious to all misery; incapable of restoring himself, or of receiving the least assistance from any power in heaven or in earth; God spared not his only-begotten Son, but in his unexampled love to the world, gave him, who alone was able to repair the breach. Every gift of God is good: the bounties of his common providence are very valuable: that he should continue life, and supply that life with food, raiment, and a variety of comforts, to those who by rebellion had forfeited all, was wonderful: but what are all inferior blessings, compared to this unspeakable gift of the Son of his love? Abraham had given many proofs of his love and obedience before he was commanded to offer up Isaac upon the altar; but God seems to pass by all that went before, as of small account in comparison of this last instance of duty: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me," Gen. xxii. Surely we likewise must say, "In this was manifested the love of God to us, because he gave his Son, his only Son, to be the life of the world." But all comparison fails. Abraham was bound in duty, bound by gratitude; neither was it a free-will offering, but by the express command of God: but to us the mercy was undesired, as well as undeserved. "Herein is love, not that we loved God;" on the contrary, we were enemies to him, and in rebellion against him; "but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," the sins we had committed against himself. My friends, ought not this love to meet a return? Is it not most desirable to be able to say with the apostle, upon good grounds, "We love him, because he first loved us?" Should it not be our continual inquiry, "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits especially for this, which is both the crown and the spring of all the rest? Are we cold and unaffected at this astonishing proof of divine love, and are our hearts not grieved and humbled at our own ingratitude? then are we ungrateful and insensible indeed!

The justice and severity of God is no less conspicuous than his goodness in these words: as he spared not to give his Son for our sakes, so, when Christ appeared in our nature, undertook our cause, and was charged with our sins, though he was the Father's well-beloved Son, he was not spared. He drank the bitter cup of the wrath of God to the very dregs: he bore all the shame, sorrow, and pain, all the distress of body and mind, that must otherwise have fallen upon our heads. His whole life, from the manger to the cross, was one series of humiliation and suffering, John xviii. Observe him in the world, despised, vilified, persecuted even to death, by unreasonable and wicked men; ridiculed,

buffeted, spit upon; and at length nailed to the accursed tree! Consider him in the wilderness (Luke iv.), given up to the power and assaulted by the temptations of the devil! Behold him in the garden (Luke xxii.), and say, "Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger?" How inconceivable must that agony have been, which caused his blood to forsake its wonted channels, and start from every pore of his body! Behold him, lastly, upon the cross (Matth. xxvii.), suffering the most painful and ignominious death: suspended between two thieves; surrounded by cruel enemies, who made sport of his pangs; derided by all that passed by! Attend to his dolorous cry, expressive of an inward distress beyond all we have yet spoken of, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" St. Paul reminds the Galatians, that, by his preaching among them, Jesus Christ had "been evidently set forth crucified before their eyes," Gal. iii. Would it please God to bless my poor words to the like purpose, you would see a meaning you never yet observed in that awful passage, "Tribulation, and wrath, and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil" (Rom. ii.); for the punishment due to the sins of all that shall stand at the last day on the right hand of God, met and centered in Christ, the Lamb of expiation; nor was the dreadful weight removed, till he, triumphant in death, pronounced, "It is finished," John xix. Let us not think of this as a matter of speculation only; our lives, our precious souls, are concerned in it. Let us infer from hence, how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. x. The apostle Peter (2 Peter ii.) admonishes those to whom he wrote, from the fearful example of the angels who sinned, and of the old world; where the same word is used as in my text, "He spared them not:" that is, he punished them to the utmost; he did not afford them the least mitigation. It is a frequent figure of speech, by which much more is understood than is or can be expressed. Much more, then, may we say, if God spared not his own Son, "what shall be the end of those who obey not the gospel?" 1 Peter iv. If the holy Jesus was thus dealt with, when he was only accounted a sinner by imputation, where shall the impenitent and the ungodly appear? "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke xxiii. The punishment of sin in the soul in a future state is twofold: the wrath of God in all its dreadful effects, typified by fire unquenchable (Mark ix.), and the stings of conscience, represented by a worm that never dies. Our Lord endured the former; but the other perhaps could have no place in him, who was absolutely perfect and sinless. But if the prospect of one made him amazed and sorrowful beyond measure, what consternation must the concurrence of both raise in the wicked, when they shall hear and feel their irrevocable doom? May we have grace to reflect on these things, that we may flee for safety to the hope set before us, to Jesus Christ, the only, and the sure refuge from that approaching storm, which shall sweep away all the workers of iniquity as a flood, Isa. xxiii.

II. Here, as in a glass, we may see the evil of sin. The bitter fruits of sin are indeed visible everywhere. Sin is the cause of all the labour, sickness, pain, and grief, under which the whole creation groans. Sin often makes man a terror and a burden, both to himself and those about him. Sin occasions discord and confusion in families, cities, and kingdoms. Sin has always directed the march, and ensured the success, of those instruments of divine vengeance whom we style Mighty Conquerors. Those ravagers of mankind, who spread devastation and horror far and wide, and ruin more in a few days than ages can repair, have only afforded so many melancholy proofs of the malignity of sin. For this, a shower of flaming brimstone fell upon a whole country; for this, an overwhelming deluge destroyed a whole world; for this, principalities and powers were cast from heaven, and are reserved under chains of darkness (2 Peter ii.) to a more dreadful doom. But none of these things, nor all of them together, afford such a conviction of the heinous nature, and destructive effects of sin, as we may gather from these words, “He spared not his own Son.”

III. Here we may likewise see the value of the human soul. We ordinarily judge of the worth of a thing by the price which a wise man, who is acquainted with its intrinsic excellency, is willing to give for it. Now, the soul of a man was of such estimation in the sight of God, who made it, that, when it was sinking into endless ruin, he spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for our ransom. Two things especially render the soul thus important in the view of infinite wisdom: 1st, The capacity he had given it: for “he formed it for himself” (Isa. xliii.), capable of knowing, serving, and enjoying God; and by consequence, incapable of happiness in anything beneath him; for nothing can satisfy any being but the attainment of its proper end: and, 2dly, The duration he had assigned it, beyond the limits of time, and the existence of the material world. The most excellent and exalted being, if only the creature of a day, would be worthy of little regard.¹ On the other hand, immortality itself would be of small value to a creature that could rise no higher than the pursuits of animal life. But in the soul of man, the capability of complete happiness or exquisite misery, and that forever, makes it a prize worthy the contention of different worlds. For this an open intercourse was maintained between heaven and earth, till at length the Word of God appeared “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” that, in our nature, he might encounter and subdue the sworn enemy of our species. All that has been transacted in the kingdoms of providence and grace, from the beginning of the world, has been in subserviency to this grand point, the redemption of the deathless soul. And is it so? And shall there be found amongst us numbers utterly insensible of their natural dignity, that dare disparage the plan of infinite wisdom, and stake those

¹ Vide Young’s Night Thoughts, 7th Night.

souls for trifles, which nothing less than the blood of Christ could redeem! There is need to use great plainness of speech; the matter is of the utmost weight; be not, therefore, offended that I would warn you against the deceitfulness of sin. Suffer not your hearts to be entangled in the vanities of the world: either they will fail, and disappoint you in life, or at least you must leave them behind you when you die. You must enter an invisible, unknown state, where you cannot expect to meet any of those amusements or engagements which you here find so necessary to pass away the tedious load of time that hangs upon your hands. You, to whom a few hours of leisure are so burdensome, have you considered how you shall be able to support an eternity? You stand upon a brink, and all about you is uncertainty. You see, of your acquaintance, some or other daily called away, some who were as likely to live as yourselves. You know not but you may be the very next. You cannot be certain but this very night your soul may be required of you, Luke, xii. Perhaps a few hours may introduce you into the presence of that God whom you have been so little desirous to please. And can you, in such a situation, sport and play, with as little concern as the lamb, already marked out to bleed tomorrow? Oh! it is strange! How fatally has the god of this world blinded your eyes! and how dreadful must your situation be in death, if death alone can undeceive you

IV. Lastly, we may gather from these words the certainty of the gospel-salvation. God himself delivered up his Son for us all. He declared himself well pleased with him (Matth. iii.) as our Surety, upon his first entrance upon his work; and testified his acceptance of his undertaking, in that he raised him from the dead, and received him into heaven as our Advocate. Now, “if God himself be thus for us, who can be against us Rom. viii. If he who only has a right to judge us, is pleased to justify us, “who can lay anything to our charge? If Christ who died” for our sins, and is risen on our behalf, has engaged to “intercede for us, who shall condemn?” “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Nor is this all; but everything we stand in need of is fully provided; and we may well argue, as the apostle has taught us elsewhere, “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” (Rom. v.); or, as in the passage before us, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,” when we were alienated from him, “how shall he not with him freely give us all things,” now he has taught us to pray, and given us his own promises to plead for all we ask?—This brings me to the second clause of the text; only it may be proper, before I enter upon it, to subjoin two cautions, to prevent mistakes from what has been already said.

1st, Let us remember that all is a free gift. He gave his Son: he gives all things with him. The gospel allows no place for merit of our own in any respect, there was no moving cause in us, unless our misery may be deemed

such. Our deliverance, in its rise, progress, and accomplishment, must be ascribed to grace alone; and he that would glory, must glory only in the Lord, 1 Cor. i.

2dly, Let us observe the apostle's phrase. He says not absolutely for all, but for us all; that is, those who are described in the former part of the chapter, "who are led by the Spirit of God, who walk not after the flesh, who are delivered from the bondage of corruption," who have liberty to call God "Abba, father," and prove their relation by following him as "dear children." Christ is "the author of eternal salvation to those only who obey him," Heb. v. It cannot be otherwise, since a branch of that salvation is to deliver us "from our sins," and "the present evil world" (Gal. i.); to "purify us from dead works, to serve the living God." "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall," notwithstanding all that Christ has done or suffered, yea so much the rather, "of the flesh reap corruption," Gal. vi.

The text having declared, that God spared not his Son for our sakes, proceeds to infer, that "with him he will assuredly give us all things." Here we may take notice, first, that the words *all things* must be limited to such as are needful and good for us. It may be said of many of our desires, "ye know not what ye ask" (Matth. xx.): in such cases, the best answer we can receive is a denial. For those blessings which God has promised absolutely to give, such as pardon, grace, and eternal life, we cannot be too earnest or explicit in our prayers; but in temporal things we should be careful to ask nothing but with submission to the divine will. The promises, it is true, appertain to "the life that now is, as well as that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are ours, if we are Christ's," 1 Cor. iii. But the particular *modus* of these things God has reserved in his own hands, to bestow them as best shall suit our various tempers, abilities, and occasions. And it is well for us that it is so; for we should soon ruin ourselves if left to our own choice: like children who are fond to meddle with what would hurt them, but refuse the most salutary medicines, if unpalatable; so we often pursue, with earnestness and anxiety, those things, which, if we could obtain them, would greatly harm, if not destroy us. Often, too, with a rash and blind impatience, we struggle to avoid or escape those difficulties which God sees fit to appoint for the most gracious and merciful purposes,—to correct our pride and vanity, to exercise and strengthen our faith, to wean us from the world, to teach us a closer dependence upon himself, and to awaken our desires after a better inheritance.

Again, as God, by his promise freely to give us all things, has not engaged to comply with the measure of our unreasonable, short-sighted wishes: so neither has he confined himself as to the time or manner of bestowing his gifts. The blessing we seek, though perhaps not wholly improper, may be at

present unseasonable; in this case, the Lord will suspend it, till he sees it will afford us the comfort and satisfaction he intends us by it: and then we shall be sure to have it. Sometimes it is withheld, to stir us up to fervency and importunity in our prayers, sometimes to make it doubly welcome and valuable when it comes. So likewise as to the manner: we ask one good thing, and he gives an equivalent in something else; and when we come to weigh all things, we see cause to say his choice was best. Thus David acknowledges: "In the day that I called, thou didst answer me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," Psal. cxxxviii, David asked for deliverance from trouble; the Lord gave him strength to bear it; and he allows his prayer was fully answered. A parallel case the apostle records: he besought the Lord thrice (2 Cor. xii.) for the removal of that trial which he calls "a thorn in the flesh:" the answer he received was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Such an assurance was more valuable than the deliverance he sought could be. Sometimes we seek a thing in a way of our own, by means and instruments of our own devising. God crosses our feeble purposes, that he may give us the pleasure of receiving it immediately from himself. It were easy to enlarge on this head; let it suffice to know, our concerns are in his hands who does all things well; and who will, and does, appoint all to work together for our good.

From the latter clause, thus limited and explained, many useful directions might be drawn. I shall only mention two or three, and conclude.

1st, Since we are told, that God freely gives us all things, let us learn to see and acknowledge his hand in all we have, and in all we meet with. When Jacob was returning to Canaan after a long absence (Gen. xxxii.), the fear of his brother Esau occasioned him to divide his family and substance into separate companies; and, comparing his present situation with the poor condition in which he had been driven from home twenty years before, he breaks out into this act of praise: "I am not worthy, O Lord, of all thy mercies; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands!" How pious and how cheering was this reflection! And afterwards (Gen. xxxiii.), when his brother Esau asked him concerning his sons, "They are the children (said he), which God has graciously given thy servant." Such a deep and abiding persuasion of the most high God ordering and over-ruling all our concerns, would, like the light, diffuse a lustre and a beauty upon everything around us. To consider every comfort of life as an effect and proof of the divine favour towards us, would, like the feigned alchemist's stone, turn all our possessions into gold, and stamp a value upon things which a common eye might judge indifferent. Nor is this more than the truth: "The hairs of our head are all numbered," Matth. x. The eye of divine providence is upon every sparrow of the field; nor can we properly term any circumstance of our lives small, since such as seem most trifling in themselves do often give birth to those which we judge most important. On the other hand, to be able to discover the wisdom

and goodness of our heavenly Father through the darkest cloud of troubles and afflictions, to see all our trials appointed to us, in number, weight, and measure; nothing befalling us by chance, nothing without need, nothing without a support, nothing without a designed advantage;—what a stay must these apprehensions be to the soul! Take away these, and man is the most forlorn, helpless, miserable object in the world; pining for everything he has not, trembling for everything he has; equally suffering under the pressure of what does happen, and the fear of what may: liable to thousands of unsuspected dangers, yet unable to guard against those which are most obvious. Were there no future life, it would be our interest to be truly and uniformly religious, in order to make the most of this. How unhappy must they be, to whom the thoughts of a God ever-present is a burden they strive, in vain, to shake off! But let us learn to acknowledge him in all our ways, and then he will direct and bless our paths, Prov. iii.

2d, Since all we have is the gift of God, let this teach us, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content. Our heavenly Father knoweth what we have need of before we ask him, Matth. vi. The earth is his, and the fulness thereof (Psal. xxiv.); and his goodness is equal to his power, a proof of which we have in the text. He has already given us more than ten thousand worlds. Are you poor? Be satisfied with the Lord's appointment. It were as easy to him to give you large estates as to supply you with the bread you eat, or to continue your breath in your nostrils: but he sees poverty best for you; he sees prosperity might prove your ruin; therefore he has appointed you the honour of being in this respect conformable to your Lord, who when on earth had not where to lay his head, Matth. viii. Have any of you lost a dear friend or relative, in whose life you thought your own lives bound up? Be still, and know that he is God, Psal. xlvi. It was he who gave you that friend; his blessing made your friend a comfort to you; and though the stream is now cut off, the fountain is still full. Be not like a wild bull in a net; the Lord has many ways to turn your mourning into joy. Are any of you sick? Think how the compassionate Jesus healed diseases with a word, in the days of his flesh. Has he not the same power now as then? Has he not the same love? Has he, in his exalted state, forgot his poor languishing members here below? No, verily: he still retains his sympathy; he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities; he knows our frame; he remembers we are but dust, Psal. ciii. It is because sickness is better for you than health, that he thus visits you. He dealt in the same manner with Lazarus, whom he loved, John xi. Resign yourselves, therefore to his wisdom, and repose in his love. There is a land where the blessed inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick" (Isa. xxxiii.); and there all that love the Lord Jesus shall shortly be. Are any of you tempted? "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him," James, i. Sure, you need no other

argument to be content, shall I say, or to rejoice and be exceeding glad? “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him,” Heb. xii. Be it in poverty or losses, in body or mind, in your own persons or another’s it is all appointed by God, and shall issue in your great benefit, if you are of the number of those that love him.

3d, Once more, since it is said that all things are freely given us in and together with Christ, let us “give all diligence to make our calling and election sure” (2 Pet. i.); to know that we have an interest in him and his mediation; and then (if I may borrow a common expression) we are made forever. The Lord Jesus Christ, sent from God on a merciful errand to a lost world, did not come empty: no; he is fraught with all blessings, suitable to all persons, extending to all times, enduring to all eternity. O make it your great care to know him and to please him; study his word, call upon his name, frequent his ordinances, observe his sayings, seek to know him as the only way to God (John xiv.); the way to pardon, peace, and divine communion here, and to complete happiness hereafter. When once you can say, “My Beloved is mine” (Song ii.), I account all his interest my own; “and I am his,” I have given myself up to him without reserve,—you will, you must be happy. You will be interested in all his attributes and communicable perfections. His wisdom will be your high tower, his providence your constant shield, his love your continual solace. “He will give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways,” Psal. xci. In times of difficulty he will direct your counsels; in times of danger he will fill you with comfort, and “keep you in perfect peace” (Isa. xxvi.), when others quake for fear. He will bless your basket and your store, your substance and your families: your days shall happily pass in doing your Father’s will, and receiving renewed tokens of his favour; and at night you shall lie down, and your sleep shall be sweet. When afflictions befall you (for these likewise are the fruits of love), you shall see your God near at hand, “a very present help in trouble (Psal. xlvi.); you shall find your strength increased in proportion to your trial; you shall in due time be restored, as gold from the furnace, purified sevenfold, to praise your great deliverer. Everything you meet in life shall yield you profit; and death, which puts a fatal period to the hope of the wicked; death, at whose name thousands turn pale, shall to you be an entrance into a new and endless life. He who tasted death for you (Heb. ii.), and sanctified it to you, shall lead and support you through that dark valley: you shall shut your eyes upon the things of time, to open them the next moment in the blissful presence of your reconciled God. You that a minute before were surrounded by weeping, helpless friends, shall, in an instant, be transported and inspired to join that glorious song, “To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us priests and kings to God and his Father; to him be glory and strength for ever and ever. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and

strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing,” Rev. v. Thus “blessed shall the man be that fears the Lord,” Psal. cxxviii. “Thus shall it be done to him whom the King delighteth to honour,” Esth. vi. Amen.