

SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS;

BY THE

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LATE OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND CHAPLAIN TO
THE RIGHT HON. THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON.

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,
BY SAMUEL DREW, A. M.

AND A

DISSERTATION ON HIS CHARACTER, PREACHING, &c.
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SERMON LXIV.

THE BELOVED OF GOD.

And of Benjamin, he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.—
Deut. xxxiii. 12.

OH! what a dismal sight is it, to see an old man with his hoary head grown grey in sin, and hardened in iniquity!

On the other hand, I believe, to all that consider rightly, there is no grander sight almost under the sun, than to see an old grey-headed man keeping up a consistent character; and proving, by his conduct, that “his path, (like that of the just,) is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day, especially when persons have been called to act in a public character; when they have been eminent either for the highness of their station, or for the largeness of their income. It is on this account that I admire old Jacob; how grand he looked when leaning on his staff, with all the composure in the world, under a divine influence, blessing his children standing round him! But, methinks, there is one who was called to act a more public part, namely, Moses, who was honoured of God to be a great legislator, king in Jeshurun, a lawgiver between Judah’s feet, as pupils used to be at the feet of their teachers, to receive their instruction. If you have a mind to see how bright he shines, you must read Deut, xxxii. indeed you must read all Deuteronomy, which is nothing but a sermon that Moses, at various times, preached to the children of Israel; and having done preaching, he sang a hymn of his own composing, and that too at a time when he knew, at the very finishing of the song, he should immediately have his soul kissed away, and be called to sing a better song in the kingdom of heaven. A person would need a good deal of composure, a good deal of the Spirit’s influences, a large measure of it, cheerfully thus to stand in view of death, just on the very borders of the grave; you see this in chap, xxxii. and here in chap, xxxiii. One would have thought he had said enough, yet he seems as it were not to know how to leave off; he parted from the people blessing them; they had used him ill, they provoked him in the wilderness; he had bore with them many, many long years; sure you would have thought he would have went away in a huff: no, that eminent sun by no means goes down in wrath; his eyes did not so much as wax dim, nor his intellectual powers impair in all that time: he sweetly gives them all a blessing before he goes. If you read this chap, xxxiii. you will find how various, yet special, are the blessings which, in a prophetic strain, he foretells should attend particular persons, or tribes. I have been reading them over, and though I admire them all, I was at a loss which to speak from, till the bless-

ing of Benjamin fixed my attention, not only as sweet, but instructing. “The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety, by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, he shall dwell between his shoulders.” This is a blessing indeed, if we look only to the literal interpretation of the words, and a literal commentator can go no further; he must confine them to Benjamin; and will tell us, that this Scripture was fulfilled at the building of the temple. The temple was built upon two hills, one in the tribe of Benjamin, the other in the tribe of Judah; the temple being built there, and Benjamin being placed near it, then Benjamin dwells in safety by the Lord, by having his lot cast near the temple. How often, alas! is it the case, I am sure it is very often the case in London, the nearer the church, the further from God; but some make good use of it, and are glad to get near the church, that they may be nearer God. The temple being placed between two hills, so Benjamin as it were dwells between God’s shoulders; so far a literal commentator can go, here he stops: a spiritual commentator, and a spiritual reader, go further; O, says he, this is true, but at the same time this is not the whole truth; and I am persuaded, when a person is helped by the Spirit to read the Scriptures, the declarations that are made, and those particular promises, the true believer applies with great propriety to himself; and therefore I think I may venture to aver, that the blessing which Moses here pronounces upon him in the name of the Lord, belongs to God’s people in all ages whatever. God, in his infinite mercy, grant that this blessing may descend upon us and ours, that it may descend to your latest posterity.

Observe how wonderfully the persons to whom the blessing is given are characterized: of Benjamin it is said, “The beloved of the Lord;” the beloved of the Lord, pray who are they? Why, the men that the Scriptures always speak of, whose constant uniform character is, they love God in all ages. It is not said, the Presbyterians shall dwell in safety; Moses never heard of a Presbyterian in his life; he never heard of the name: nor is it said, the Independents shall dwell in safety; he never heard of that word: nor is it said the Papists shall dwell in safety; he never heard of Papists, nor of the pope: nor is it said, that the church of England shall dwell in safety; no, neither is it said, that the Methodists shall dwell in safety, though I trust there are a great many good people among these mongrels of the church: but it is spoken of all the people of God; God help us all to apply it to ourselves!

Here is a dispute between the Arminians and the Calvinists: ask an Arminian what is meant by “the beloved of the Lord;” O, say they that are for general redemption, the beloved of the Lord signifies all the men that were ever born into the world; that is a good broad bridge to take them in, but broad bridges are not always the strongest bridges in the world. The Arminians will assert it, that Judas was as much beloved of God as Peter, or any other of the apostles; and those that are not Arminians, but are what you

call Quakers, and there are a good many, I believe, among them, that have better hearts than heads; they say, that we are all alike, that we all come into the world with a seed of grace, and shall be happy according to the improvement of that grace; hence they talk nothing of a Christ *without*, but *within*; happy they that experience a Christ within! God's mercy is sure, and over all his works; and in one sense, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men, that is, of all sorts of men; even the wicked are beholden to Jesus Christ, whom they despise, for every worldly comfort they enjoy; in this sense we should learn to love as our Lord, we are told, loved the young man when he saw he had been a harmless and good liver.—But we must go more to what we call Calvinism, what I call Scriptural truth. The love which Jesus Christ bore for the young man, quite differed from that love with which he loved Martha, Mary, and their brother: there was a cargo for you! three in one family; God grant it may be your happy lot and mine! two sisters and one brother, three to entertain Jesus Christ, all in a peculiar manner beloved of the Lord. It is not said of Benjamin, they shall (that is, they that love the Lord) they shall dwell in safety, no; it would not be so strong to them, as to say, “the beloved of the Lord;” for God knows our love is not worth a shilling: all the faith of God's people, says bishop Hall, is but mere infidelity; and all the love of the people of God is but mere hatred, compared with God's love, or that which his law justly requires; therefore it is said, “beloved of the Lord,” and that because if ever we love God, he first loved us, which is what Moses' very expression means; as streams flow from the fountain, so they shall return to it. Hence the apostle says, “Knowing your election, brethren, beloved of God.” I know very well the Mystics talk of loving God with a love for himself only, without any respect to the creature at all; that is, we must love God without any regard at all for what God has done for us; nay, some go so far as to say, that if we do not so love God, we are not converted, though we have as much grace as we can have; that we do not love God properly till we love him for what he is, not what he has done for us: I verily believe, the angels do not love God in that manner; and we cannot love God till we are made partakers of a divine nature, and have eyes given us to see his glory.

The grand inquiry is then, how shall I know that I am one of the beloved of the Lord? The natural man never minds the love of God; he flatters himself he loves God naturally, that the love of God is a plant that grows in nature's garden; but a spiritual person does not so. What, does the king take notice of me? Does the king look pleasant upon me in a drawing-room? Am I called to wait upon him? Am I beloved of this, and that, and the other person? If I be, let God go, I care not; if I have but the love of this, and that courtier, I care not whether God loves me or no: this will not do for an awakened soul; and therefore the grand inquiry, and one proof of a person's

being awakened, is, how shall I know whether God loves me, or not? Why, try; I am persuaded of it, that we may as well know that God loves us, and we love God, as we may know that the sun shines at noon-day; how shall I know it, but by the effects of this love, by the fruits of it? That great man, Dr. Watts, who was called the sweet singer of Israel, says, “We should go first to the grammar-school of faith and repentance, before we go to the university of predestination;” whereas, the devil would have them go first to the university, to examine whether they were elected or rejected, or no: they should do as a good woman once did, when Satan tempted her, and wanted to distress her, that there were but few to be saved; she said, if there were but two to be saved, she would strive to be one of them. Surely I am beloved of the Lord, if my natural enmity against the Lord is slain. How do I know I love a person? how can you prove that you love me? Why, say you, I hated you the other day. How many people met I with the other day, that could a few weeks ago have pulled me out of Tottenham court; but God has overcome their hearts. The person now confesses his former enmity, and when that enmity is removed, and you are reconciled to them, cannot you know that you love them? And if God has removed that enmity to Christ out of your hearts, surely you are one of the beloved of the Lord.

We are the beloved of the Lord, if we are brought to abhor and renounce that which stands between us and the Lord; I mean, our cursed self-righteousness. Can I prove that I have renounced my own duties, that I am sick of my duties, as well as my sins; none but the beloved of the Lord see this: an enemy to the Lord may have this in his head, but it is only a friend of the Lord that has this in his heart: a talkative professor can speak of it; you may teach, perhaps, a parrot to pray, but it is odds to talk like a parrot and experience like a Christian. Now, if I have renounced my own righteousness, and been helped to trust to Christ’s, to believe on the Son of God, let Satan say what he will, I am sure I am the beloved of the Lord, for none but those that are beloved by him with an everlasting love, are brought to believe on him.—I may know I am beloved of the Lord, from what? Why, experiencing “his love shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost.” Jonathan loved David as his own soul. Most of you know what love is, in a carnal sense; and if there be a union of souls between creature and creature, surely there must be a union of souls between the Creator and the creature beloved of God; it cannot be otherwise; this love will have its effects.

If I am beloved of the Lord, if, having his love in my heart, I show it by loving those he has loved.—Some people may say, I love you, but I do not love those about you, your friends; why, you are not bound to love all alike, but it may teach you to be civil to that person’s beloved. As soon as ever we hear of a Christian, as soon as ever we hear of a believer, as soon as ever we hear of a sinner turning to God, O it will rejoice us; and we shall be

like the angels in heaven, who “rejoice over one sinner’s repentance, more than over ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance.” Some people may say, I love dearly to hear of a person’s being converted by such a minister; I love dearly to hear of persons converted by a dissenter, I love dearly to hear of persons converted by a churchman, but I do not like people should be converted by this and that person; why, I believe there are a great many people whose hearts are thus narrow, but this mixture is not of God; and I pray God they may know it by experience; that they may know they are beloved of God, then they will rejoice when other people are brought to believe on him, whoever is made the instrument. “Grace and mercy be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” What would have become of poor Paul, if he had only loved his own followers: the Romans he never saw till he was taken there a prisoner, but he loved all the rest of the apostles, wrote letters to all sorts, not to their particular parties or churches, but to all those “that loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity;” and if we do love in this manner, we may be assured we are beloved of the Lord, for none but the Lord could beget such love in us.

If we are beloved of the Lord, we shall be hated by the world. “If you were of the world, the world would love you, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Will you make me believe that any of you are beloved of the Lord, that never lost your good character by it? Why, you may as well make me believe that you are emperors of the world: Where is the blessing the sermon on the mount speaks of? Where is the blessing of persecution? Where is the blessing of being hated of all men? Where is the blessing of being hated for the cross? You love the Lord, and not carry the cross after you! You love the Lord, and not be hated as your Lord was! I do not say all are hated alike; poor ministers are set in the front of the battle; in proportion to our successes we shall be hated. There are numbers of ministers now sleep in whole skins, that were formerly in a worse plight; the devil disturbs them not, because they are quite civil, and do not trouble and contradict him; but if you oppose the world and the devil, the world will hate you; and no greater proof of being beloved of the Lord, than the world hating you,—but it must be for Christ’s sake. So Ahab said of the prophet, “all his prophesying is against me;” I hate him; the world hated him; “the world hated me,” says our Lord, “before it hated you;” and the apostles, when they began to speak for God too, they were hated like their Lord; and glory to God for it, for it is a blessed mark of their belonging to God, when they are honoured to suffer for him, and we are never right till we are bearing the cross: to see men or women sleeping under the cross, sculking and hiding from it; is this love? Give me a professor that will wear a cockade in his hat, and is never easier than when he is combating the enemies of his King.

If I am the beloved of the Lord, I really shall live above the world. You may say what you will, and you may bring the scriptures as low as you think proper, “but the friendship of the world is hatred to God; and if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Now, by not loving the world, I do not mean that you should shut up your shops, and run into a convent: how idle for persons to say they love God, and hide themselves from the world; that is no religion at all. But the greatest proof of a Christian’s loving God is, I am in the world, but not of it; I work with my hands all the day, but my heart is from it. I remember a dear friend once sent me word, many years ago, how busy he was morning and night, up early and late; perhaps, says he, you will think by this account, I am worldly; he said, No, sir, I thank God that my heart is above the world: God grant we may thus prove we love God! I do not say, but many that love the Lord may be in another situation; but when persons are enabled to leave all for Christ, it is a great mercy: God be praised, we have some such; God add to their happiness!

They that love the Lord, will study to keep from offending God, not for fear of being damned, but because sin murdered his dear Son. There are a great many people abstain from sin for fear of punishment; but hear what Joseph said, “My master has done thus and thus by me, how can I then do this great wickedness and sin against God?” my God that loves me? so they would not stab him, because he has been wounded enough already.

If we are the beloved of the Lord, we shall be willing to work for the Lord: faith without works is the religion of every carnal man; make an end of one good work, and then begin another, and lay it down, and wonder that Jesus Christ should accept any thing at your hands. I knew a lady some time ago, that wanted still more to be employed for God; says she, If Jesus Christ would but help me to do such and such a thing I have in view, O I would kiss his feet, and dedicate myself more and more to his honour: a true Christian loves to be thus employed, but, above all, he is glad he has the blood of Christ to wash his duties in.

I shall mention but one thing more, though I might mention twenty: If we have the love of God in our hearts, though we cannot get over the fears of death at all times, yet I think the bent of the mind of such a person will be, When shall I see the object of my love, “him whom my soul loves?” They sit at ordinances, and long to be led to the fountain-head. “I am in a strait between two,” says Paul; the word signifies a strong, an intense desire to be with Christ: he does not say to be in heaven, but “to be with Christ, which is far better;” but to stay here is better for you, therefore you should be content to stay, not because you love the world, but as willing to wait your Master’s call. I could not help admiring while I was reading it, that when Christ ascended to heaven, one angel, one particular angel, (it must

have been a blessed one,) left those that were attending Christ into glory, stopped in the way,—for what? Why, to preach to the apostles: “Why stand ye thus gazing into heaven?” I am ashamed of you, says he: here is an angel, one of the convoy, waiting upon them: he does not say. Let me go to heaven with thee, and let me come down again and preach; no, he stays down thus, to preach to a few poor fishermen. Lord search us. Lord try us, Lord God Almighty help us to examine ourselves, that we may know whether we are beloved of the Lord or not.

So that some may say, I think I can apply all the marks, though I do not depend upon marks. I have a number of bills here tonight: One says, if I am beloved of the Lord, why am I so poor? Another says, if I am beloved of the Lord, why am I so afflicted? Says another, if I am beloved of the Lord, why am I left to starve? can I think God loves me, when I see thousands and thousands squandered away every day, and yet my poor babes groaning, my poor children quite emaciated, for want only of a little bread that I see in the baker’s shop as I go along? if I am beloved of the Lord, how is it my poor children are ready to cry for bread, and I have none to give them? that others are adorned with diamonds, but I have not so much as a rag to put on my little one’s back? If I am beloved of the Lord, how is it that my friends are against me; my children, instead of being a blessing, are a curse, and break my heart. If I am beloved of the Lord, how is it that I have so many domestic trials, that cause me to cry out, “Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar.” If I am beloved of the Lord, how is it that I am harassed with blasphemous thoughts thus; the trials I meet with in bringing down the outward man. If I am beloved of the Lord, how is it that instead of living in plenty, I now want bread to eat, and should be glad to have it from those “I once scorned to set with the dogs of my flock?—Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Our dear Jesus was never more beloved of his Father than when he cried out, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” never more beloved of his Father than when he was sweating great drops of blood, when he cried, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” I remember a dear minister of Christ, now in Suffolk, told me, when he was in Scotland, going to receive the sacrament, he was so dry and dark, and benumbed and tempted, that he thought he would go away; as he was going, this word came to his mind, When was Jesus Christ most acceptable to his Father? When did he give the greatest trial of his love? when he cried out, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” Why then, says he, upon this I will venture; if I perish, I perish at Christ’s feet; and he came away filled with comfort from his blessed God and Father in Christ.

Well then, what is to be done to those that are beloved of the Lord? Here is for you, “they shall dwell in safety;” why? “they shall dwell be-

tween his shoulders;" observe the expression, the prophet, says, "they shall dwell in love." Will God indeed dwell on earth? says Solomon: yes, God, says he dwells in my earthly heart, made heavenly by the grace of God. Did ever any hear such an expression from the mouth of God, "I will be thy God; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward?" He does not say an angel shall go; if God had only said in his word, that I was to be kept by angels, I am sure my wicked heart would despair, because it would deceive all the angels in heaven: but God saith, "I will be thy keeper;" so they that would hurt his people, must go through God himself. "They shall dwell on high; bread shall be given to them, and their water shall be sure. They are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, to everlasting salvation." It is said, "they shall dwell between his shoulders:" the government of the church, and the world, and all, are upon the Redeemer's shoulders, and the Lord's everlasting arms are under his people. Observe it is said, "they dwell in safety;" and very often we are safest when we think we are most in danger.

"They shall dwell in safety;" those that are lovers of the Lord Jesus shall dwell safely with God on earth, and eternally with him in heaven. O may God bless this foolishness of preaching to some of God's poor, and, perhaps, doubting beloved ones. Come you poor souls, I often think that this field preaching is particularly comfortable to the poor; whenever field preaching is stopped, farewell to the power of religion. When poor people have been working hard all day, how sweet must it be for them to come to a place of worship, and get a lift for tomorrow: may the Lord God bless this barleybread! If you can wrap yourselves in God, let the world hate you; God's children are the greatest plagues and trials one to another, but God loves them, God smiles upon them, and therefore they shall dwell in safety. The devil told me I should not dwell in safety, but I bid him defiance, and turned him to Deut. xxxiii. and told him Benjamin's lot was mine; "the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him."

Woe, woe, woe be to you that have no marks of being beloved of the Lord. Have we any profane Esaus here tonight, that are saying, Do not tell me of your being beloved of the Lord; if I can have the love of such a person, I do not care whether God loves me or not; you may tell me God loves people when they are afflicted, I want none of these marks, I think God loves me because I am in a good frame. I think God loves me because I prosper. I think God loves me because I am very healthy and strong. I do not care whether I wait upon God or not, or give to the poor or not?—I will not soften the matter, there is no going to heaven without wearing a fool's coat. O, you may say, that is your imprudence; you make people uneasy, and set them upon a false scent, and make them their own persecutors; thank God, I can go into a hundred companies, and not give them reason to

say I am a Methodist: I can go into company and sing an innocent song, I do not tell them I have a Tabernacle hymn-book in my pocket. There are few have the courage that the gentleman had who loved God, and went to see some carnal relations after he became a fool for Christ's sake: says one of the relations, It is always our custom after dinner to sing a song, and asked him to sing; he said, he would in his turn: two of them sung; his relation said to him, Come, cousin, sing; says he, I have not sung a song a good while, but, if you please, I will sing a hymn: he sung it out, but they never asked him to sing again, nor did they sing afterwards. How sweet it is to go through boldly with a thing, for Christ! Do not you think you are a coward? Are you not ashamed? Are any of you such cowards as to plead your prudence. God help you to be unmasked to-night. I do not know whether you go to a masquerade, but you have a dreadful mask upon your souls, a dreadful religious visage. I heard somebody appeared the other night, in order to bring contempt upon us, in a Methodist dress—that was one of the dresses. O how can they do so? say you: how canst *thou* do so? pretend to be a Methodist among God's people, and behave light and foolish among the children of the devil; for shame, unmask yourselves, for God will, by death, unmask your soul, and show your hypocrisy. The word hypocrite is taken from a stage-player, who acts that part he is not. God, of his infinite mercy, keep all here from stopping short.

If any of you are awakened and convinced, the Lord grant you may never rest till you know you are the beloved of the Lord. Ah! say you, I shall never know that, that I am the beloved of the Lord. I am that grey-headed wretch you mentioned at the beginning of your sermon; can God love me a drunkard, sabbath-breaker, a whoremonger, an adulterer, an unclean wretch, as ever trod on the ground! Pray what was Paul? what was the jailor? what were all the three thousand that were converted at once; what was their case? Nay, what was Adam the first sinner? and yet Adam and Eve both, I believe, received mercy of God; she is therefore called "the mother of all living," because she is the mother of all believers. Come then at a venture, come then, throw thyself upon Christ; do not say, Pardon my iniquities because they are small, but say, "Lord, pardon my iniquities, for they are great." One that was executed today for forging something to rob his father: what, a father deal thus with his son! Well, said I, it is so with a man, but our heavenly Father will pardon; and though the law is called a fiery law, yet there is, blessed be God, a new and living way. Oh sinners! oh sinners! God help you to come and venture, and strive, though you have none of the marks that have been mentioned, yet say, God can put these marks upon me. I have been courting this and that person's love; nay, I made no other use of coming to worship, but to look out for something to advance myself. I have been looking out for nothing but beauty: I have

been looking out for nothing but money, or something or other to make my fortune; but now begone, vain world; now, Lord, I would look after thee. That you may know you are the beloved of the Lord, dwell in safety on earth, and after death be conveyed to dwell with, and love him to all eternity, God grant for Christ's sake. *Amen.*