

The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners,
explained, illustrated, and proved,

I N A

S E R M O N

U P O N

R O M A N S III. 19.

By JONATHAN EDWARDS, A. M.

Late President of NEW JERSEY College, NEW ENGLAND.

Revised and Corrected by C. DE COETLOGON, A. M.

Not *thus*, our infidels th' *Eternal* draw,
 A God all o'er, consummate, absolute,
 Full-orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete :
They set at odds Heav'n's jarring attributes ;
 And, with one excellence, another wound ;
 Maim Heav'n's perfection, break its equal beams,
 Bid *Mercy* triumph over——God himself,
 Undeify'd by their opprobrious praise :
 A God *all mercy*, is a God *unjust*. YOUNG.

That to the height of this great argument
 I may assert eternal Providence,
 And justify the ways of God to man. MILTON.

BOSTON, PRINTED: LONDON, RE-PRINTED:

For J. BUCKLAND, Paternoster-Row; VALLANCE and SIMMONS,
 No. 120, Cheapside; and J. MATHEWS, Charing-Cross.

MDCCLXXIV.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermon is its own recommendation: and the importance of the subject of which it treats is too evident to need any additional arguments to engage our attention. It may not however be useless to repeat an observation of the author's in a letter to a friend, where he says, " I think I have found that no discourses have met with more remarkable success, than those in which the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty with regard to the salvation of sinners, has been insisted on. I never found so much immediate saving fruit, in any measure, of any discourses I have offered to my congregation, as some from those words, Rom. iii. 19. *That every mouth may be stopped:* endeavouring to shew from thence, that it would be *just* with God for ever to reject and cast off meer natural men."

The character and abilities of the author are well known, and therefore any panegyric upon them would be superfluous: but as this Sermon seems to have been written originally more for spiritual instruction, than for critical examination, the Editor has taken the liberty to correct the style, without any injury, he hopes, to the sense; and to lessen the tediousness of the arguments, by contracting their length, without affecting their force. Should the unlearned Reader be fatigued with the depth of reasoning upon the *infinite evil of sin*, let him but reflect for a moment, that the doctrines of *the Godhead of Christ*, the necessity of an *atonement for sin of infinite value*, and *the eternity of hell torments*, are in a great measure built upon this truth, and he will be convinced of the propriety of proving so interesting an article of the Christian faith.

Since the subject of this Sermon is so important, and the arguments in general so popular, as well as convincing; the Editor begs leave humbly to refer it to the consideration of the Book Society, whether it might not be a valuable addition to the confined class of books they are distributing for the promotion of the best interests of mankind.

97

A

S E R M O N

O N

ROMANS III. 19.

— THAT EVERY MOUTH MAY BE STOPPED. —

THE grand subject of this epistle, is the free grace of God in the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ; especially as it appears in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The more clearly to evince this doctrine, and to shew the reason of it, the apostle establishes this great point, that no flesh living can be justified by the deeds of the law. To prove which, he is very large and particular in shewing, that all mankind, not only Gentiles, but Jews were *under sin*, and so under the condemnation of the law; which is what he insists upon from the beginning of the epistle unto this place. In the first chapter he shews that the Gentiles were *under sin*, by setting forth the exceeding corruptions and horrid wickedness, which overspread the Gentile world; and then through the second and former part of the third chapter he proves, that the Jews also were in the same circumstances in this respect. They indeed valued themselves upon being God's covenant people, and circumcised, and the children of Abraham. They despised the Gentiles as polluted, condemned and accursed, but looked on themselves, on account of their external privileges, and ceremonial and moral righteousness, as a pure and holy people, and as the children of God. It was, therefore, strange doctrine to them, to be told that they

B

were

were unclean, guilty, and under the curse of the law. For this reason the apostle insists upon it more particularly, declaring in the ninth verse of this chapter, that they were no better than the Gentiles. “What then? are we better than they? no, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are *all* under sin.” To convince them of this, he produces certain passages out of their own law, or the Old Testament, from the ninth to the nineteenth verse.

It may be observed, that in these passages the apostle proves that mankind are *all* corrupt, as it is written, “There is *none* righteous, no, *not one*: there is *none* that understandeth: there is *none* that seeketh after God: they are *all* gone out of the way: there is *none* that doeth good; no, *not one*:” then he goes on to prove that they are not only *all* corrupt, but each one *wholly* corrupt, as it were all over unclean, from the crown of the head, to the soles of the feet, and therefore several particular parts of the body are specified, “Their *throat* is an open sepulchre, with their *tongues* they have used deceit, whose *mouth* is full of cursing and bitterness, their *feet* are swift to shed blood:” nor is this all, he asserts that mankind are not only *all* corrupt, and *wholly* corrupt, but corrupt *to a desperate degree*, that “destruction and misery are in their ways, the way of peace have they not known, and there is *no* fear of God before their eyes,” Rom. iii. 16, 17, 18.

Lest the Jews should imagine these declarations did not concern them, the apostle asserts, that not only *they* are not exempt, but that *they* especially must be understood, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.” By those who are *under the law*, are meant the Jews, and by the Gentiles those who are *without law*, as appears from the twelfth verse of the preceding chapter. So that the law shuts all up in universal and desperate wickedness, “That *every* mouth may be stopped.” The mouths of the Jews as well as of the Gentiles,

files, notwithstanding all the privileges by which they were distinguished from the Gentiles.

The things which the law says, are sufficient to stop the mouths of all mankind in two respects: viz. to stop them from *boasting* of their own righteousness, as the Jews were wont to do. The law stops our mouths from making any plea for life, or for the favour of God from our own righteousness. It stops them also from offering any *excuse* for ourselves, or *objection* against the execution of the sentence of the law: “That all the world may become guilty before God.” That is, that they may *appear* to be guilty, and liable to the condemnation of the law of God.

In this manner the apostle demonstrates that no flesh can be justified in God’s sight by the deeds of the law, in order to prepare the way for establishing the great doctrine of justification by faith alone; which he positively asserts and lays down as an incontestible truth, where he says, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

The doctrine immediately implied in the words of the text, and which is chosen for the subject of the present discourse, is, “That it is just with God eternally to cast off, and to destroy sinners.”—For this is the punishment to which the law condemns, against objecting to which every mouth must be stopped, because all the world are become guilty before God*.

The truth of this doctrine will evidently appear from the joint consideration

Ist. Of man’s sinfulness.

IIdly. Of God’s sovereignty.

IIIIdly. Of the sinner’s conduct towards *God*, towards *Jesus Christ*, his *neighbour*, and *himself*.

* This doctrine lies at the very root of the Christian religion, and is a full and compleat answer to all the errors and heresies advanced by Arminians, Pelagians, and Socinians in every age.

Ist. The justice of God in the eternal damnation of sinners appears from the consideration of man's sinfulness: and that whether we consider *the infinitely evil nature of all sin*, or *the quantity of sin of which men are guilty*.

If we consider the infinite evil and heinousness of sin, 'tis not unjust in God to inflict the punishment sin deserves; because a deserved punishment and a just punishment are the same thing. Now every crime or fault deserves a greater or less punishment, in proportion as the crime itself is greater or less. So that if there be any such thing as a fault infinitely heinous, it will follow that it is *just* to inflict a punishment for it, that is infinitely dreadful. A crime is more or less heinous, according as our obligations to the contrary are greater or less: and therefore if there be any Being, whom we are under infinite obligations to love, and honour and obey, the contrary temper must be *infinitely* faulty.

Our obligation to love, honour and obey any Being, is in proportion to his loveliness, honourableness, and authority. But God is a Being *infinitely* lovely, because he hath infinite beauty and excellency. To have infinite excellency and beauty, is the same thing as to have infinite loveliness. He is a Being of infinite majesty and glory; and therefore is infinitely honourable. His authority over us is infinite; and the ground of his right to our obedience, is infinitely strong; for he is infinitely worthy to be obeyed in himself, and we have an absolute, universal, and infinite dependence upon him.

So that sin against God being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous; and therefore deserving of an infinite punishment. The eternity of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite; and it renders it no more than infinite; and therefore no more than proportionable to the heinousness of their guilt*.

If

* Hence the absolute, indispensable necessity of the Godhead of Jesus Christ. Arians and Socinians were never awakened to see the *infinite evil*,

If there be *any evil* or faultiness in sin against God, there is certainly *infinite evil*: for if it be any fault at all, it has an infinite aggravation, viz. that it is against an infinite object. If it be ever so small on other accounts, yet it has one infinite dimension; and so is an *infinite evil*, which may be illustrated thus: if we suppose a thing to have infinite length, and no breadth and thickness, but to be only a meer mathematical line, it is nothing: but if it have any breadth or thickness at all, though never so small, yet if it have any one infinite dimension, viz. that of length, the quantity of it is infinite; it exceeds the quantity of any thing, however broad, thick and long, wherein these dimensions are all finite.

So that the objections that are made against the infinite punishment of sin, from the necessity, or rather the previous certainty of the futurity of sin, arising from the decree of God, or from the unavoidable original corruption of our nature, if they argue any thing, do not argue against the *infinite faultiness* of sin *directly*, and *no otherwise* than they argue against *any faultiness at all*: for if this necessity or certainty leave any evil at all in sin, that evil must be infinite by reason of the infinite object.

Hence the justice of God in *eternally* casting off wicked men: which will appear more abundantly if we consider *how much sin they commit*. From what hath been already observed, it is evident, that if men were guilty of sin, but in *one* particular, that is a sufficient ground of their *eternal rejection and condemnation*. If they are *sinners*, that is enough. This alone might be sufficient to keep them from ever lifting up their heads, and cause them to smite upon their breasts, with the Publican, who cried, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. Whereas they are not only sinners, but *full of sin*; full of principles of sin, and full of acts of sin. Their guilt

evil, guilt and demerit of sin; therefore they ignorantly and blasphemously oppose the true and essential Godhead of the Saviour of sinners.

is like great mountains, heaped one upon another, till the pile is grown up to heaven. They are *totally* corrupt, in *all* their faculties, in *every* part. All the principles of their nature, understandings, and wills; all their dispositions and affections are entirely depraved. All the members of their bodies are instruments of sin, and all their senses are inlets and outlets of sin, channels of corruption, there is nothing but sin, no good at all. “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth *no* good thing,” Rom. vii. 8. There is all manner of wickedness. There are the seeds of the greatest and blackest crimes. There are principles of all sorts of wickedness against men; and there is all wickedness against God. There are pride, enmity, contempt, quarrelling, atheism, blasphemy. There are these things in exceeding strength; the heart is under the power of them, sold under sin, and a perfect slave to it. There is hard-heartedness, hardness greater than that of a rock, or an adamant stone. There is obstinacy and perverseness in sin, that will not be overcome by threatenings or by promises, by judgments or by mercies; the very blood of God will not win the heart of a wicked man.

And there are *actual* wickednesses without number and without measure. There are breaches of *every* command, in thought, word, and deed; a life full of sin; days and nights filled up with sin; mercies abused, and frowns despised; mercy, justice, and all the divine attributes trampled on; and the honour of each person in the Trinity trodden in the dirt*.—Now if *one* sinful word or thought has so much evil in it, as to deserve eternal destruction, how do they deserve to be eternally cast off and destroyed, who are guilty of so much sin! But,

* This is done especially by Deists, who set up their *Supreme Being* in the place of the *True God*, and deny the truth of revelation,—by Arians and Socinians, who oppose the Godhead and atonement of Jesus Christ,—and by all who deny the necessity of the Spirit's influence in order to repentance, faith and holiness.

Idly. If with man's *sinfulness*, we consider God's *sovereignty*, it may serve farther to clear God's *justice* in the eternal rejection and condemnation of sinners, from the cavils and objections which are brought against it. I shall not now attempt precisely to determine, what are and what are not proper acts and exercises of God's holy sovereignty; but only that God's sovereignty extends to the following things.

Such is God's *sovereign power* and *right*, that he is originally under no obligation to keep men from sinning, but may in his providence permit or leave them to sin*. He was not obliged to keep either men or angels from falling. It is unreasonable to suppose, that if God makes a creature capable of knowing his will, and *receiving a law* from him, and being subject to his moral government, he should at the same time make it impossible for him to sin, or *break his law*. For if God be obliged to this, it destroys all *use* of any commands, laws, promises or threatnings; and the very *notion* of any moral government of God over his reasonable creatures. If God be obliged never to permit a creature to fall, there is an end of all divine laws, or authority, or government of God over his creature; there can be no manner of use of these things.

God may permit sin, though the being of sin will certainly ensue on that permission: and so, by *permitting*, he may *dispose* and *order* the event. If there were any such thing as Chance, or meer contingency, it would have been very unfit that God should have left it to meer Chance, whether man should fall or no. For Chance, if there should be any such thing, is *blind* and *undesigning*. And certainly it is more fit that an event of so great importance, should be disposed and ordered by infinite *wisdom*, than that it should be left to *blind chance*.

* That he could have prevented the entrance of sin into the world, if it had pleased him, cannot be denied, without denying his omnipotence.

Again,

Again, it was fit that it should be at the ordering of the divine wisdom and good pleasure, whether every individual should stand for himself, or whether the first father of mankind should be appointed the moral and federal head, and representative of the rest*. If God has not liberty to determine either of these two, as he pleases, it must be because it would be injurious to mankind. But it is not injurious to mankind; for there is nothing in the nature of the case that can render it *better*, that each man should stand for himself, than that all should be represented by their common father: it will follow therefore that it is not injurious to mankind that God should chuse and appoint the latter rather than the former.

Again, when men are fallen and become sinful, God by his *sovereignty* has a *right* to determine about their redemption, as he pleases. He has a right to determine whether he will redeem *any* or no. He might, if he had pleased, have left *all* to perish, or he might have redeemed all. Or, he may redeem *some*, and leave others; and if he do so, he may take *who he pleases*, and leave who he pleases: because, to suppose that all have forfeited his favour and *deserve* to perish, and to suppose he may not, if he please, leave them *all* to perish, implies a contradiction.

It is meet, therefore that God should order all these things, *according to his own pleasure*. By reason of that greatness and glory, by which he is infinitely above all, he is *worthy* to be *sovereign*, and that his *pleasure* should in *all things* take place. He is *worthy* that he should make *himself* his *end*, and that he should make nothing but his own wisdom his rule in pursuing that end; without asking leave or counsel of any, and without giving account of any of his matters. It is *fit* that he, who is absolutely perfect and infinitely wise, should determine every thing by his *own will*; even things

* That Adam was appointed the federal head or representative of all his posterity, is clear from the comparison made between the first and second Adam in Rom. v.

of the greatest importance; such as the eternal salvation or damnation of sinners. It is *meet* that he should be *their sovereign*, because he is the first Being, the eternal Being, from whom all other beings are. He is the Creator of all things; all things are absolutely and universally dependent upon him; and therefore it is right that he should act as the sovereign possessor of heaven and earth. But,

III^{dly}. If God should eternally reject and destroy sinners, there would be an *exact agreeableness* between God's dealing with them and their own spirit and behaviour. There would not only be an equality, but a similitude. In order to evince the truth of this, I would particularly shew by an appeal to every man's conscience, that if God should eternally destroy you, it would be agreeable to your treatment of God—to your treatment of Jesus Christ—to your behaviour towards your neighbours—and to your own foolish conduct towards yourself.

If God should for ever cast you off, it would be exactly agreeable to your *treatment of him*. That you may be sensible of this, consider,

You have never exercised the least degree of *love to God*; and therefore it would be agreeable to your treatment of him, if he should never express any *love to you*. When God converts and saves a sinner, it is a wonderful and unspeakable manifestation of divine love. When a poor lost soul is brought home to Christ, when all his sins are forgiven, and he is made a child of God, it will take up an eternity to express the greatness of that love. And *why* should God be obliged to shew such wonderful love to you, who never exercised the least degree of love to him in all your life? Though God is infinitely glorious and lovely, you have never loved him—and why then should God love you, who are all over deformed and loathsome as a filthy worm, or rather an hateful viper?—You have no benevolence in your heart towards God; you never rejoiced in

God's happiness; if it had been possible for him to have been miserable, you would have liked it as well as if he were happy; you would not have cared for it, nor mourned for it, any more than you now do for the devil's being miserable—*Why* then, should God take so much care for your happiness, as to do such great things for it, as he doth for those who are saved? or, *why* should God be careful to save you from misery? You care not what becomes of God's glory; you are not distressed how much soever his honour seems to suffer in the world—*why* then should God care any more for your welfare?—Has it not been so, that if you could but promote your private interests, or gratify your lusts, you cared not how much the glory of God suffered? And why may not God advance his own glory in your eternal ruin, not caring how much your interest suffers by it? You never sincerely made the glory of God your end; you never acted from real respect to him—*why* then should God do such great things for you, as the changing your nature, raising you from spiritual death to life, conquering the powers of darkness for you, delivering you from eternal misery, and bestowing upon you eternal glory?

Moreover, you have *sighted* and *made light* of God; and why then may not God *justly sight* you? Sinners are apt to think their souls are precious, and that it would be a dreadful thing if they should perish for ever. They do not like the thoughts of God's making light of their salvation. But then, ought they not to think, that as their souls are precious, so is God's honour precious. The honour of the *infinite God*, the *great King* of heaven and earth, is surely a thing of as much importance, as the happiness of a *poor little worm*. But yet you have sighted that honour of God, and valued it no more than the dirt under your feet. You have been told that such and such things were contrary to the will of an holy God, and contrary to his honour; but you cared not for that. Thus have you sighted God—
and

and is it not *just* that God should *sight* you? Or, are you more honourable than God, that he must make much of you, how light soever you make of him, and of his glory?

You have not only slighted God *in time past*, but you slight him *still*. You may make a pretence and shew of honouring him in your prayers and other external duties; but it is not from any honour you have to God in your *heart*: that shew of it is meerly forced, and the fruit of fear, as it is written in Psalm lxvi. 3. “Through the greatness of thy power, shall thine *enemies* submit themselves to thee.” In the original it is, shall lie unto thee; that is, yield feigned submission unto thee. There is a rod held over you, on account of which you *seem* to pay respect to God. If that were removed, the very appearance of your religion would soon vanish away. Sometimes it may be you weep in your prayers, and in hearing sermons; but it is for *yourself*, because you are afraid of hell: and do you think that God ought to take notice of you, because you can cry for fear of being damned; when at the same time you have no regard for the honour of God? or, can it be *unjust* in God to sight you, a little, wretched, despicable creature; a meer nothing, and less than nothing, a vile insect, that has risen up in contempt against the majesty of heaven and earth?

Besides, *why* should God bestow salvation upon you, when you have been so *ungrateful* for the mercies he has already bestowed upon you? God has watched over you, provided for you, preserved you, and followed you with mercies all your days; and yet you have continued sinning against him. God has given you food and raiment, but you have used both in the service of sin. He has preserved you while you slept; but when you awoke, it was to return to the old way of sinning. God, notwithstanding this ingratitude, has not withheld his mercy: but his kindness has never won your heart. It may be you have received

many remarkable mercies, recoveries from sickness, or preservations of your life, when if you had died, you must have gone directly to hell: but you never had any true thankfulness for any of these mercies. God has kept you out of hell, and continued your day of grace, and the offers of salvation, and that, while you did not regard your own salvation so much as to seek after it. But what thanks has God received for it? what returns have you made for all this kindness? as God has multiplied mercies, so have you multiplied provocations.

And can you think it *unjust* in God, if after all this, he do not bestow more mercy upon you? will you find fault with him, if he do not bestow heaven, and all its blessings upon you? what ideas have you of yourself, to expect that God should do so much for you, after all your ingratitude to him for his goodness and mercy, which have followed you all the days of your life?

Again, you have voluntarily chosen to take part with satan in his enmity and opposition to God; how *justly* therefore might you be with him in his punishment? you did not chuse to be on God's side, but chose rather to side with the devil, and have obstinately continued in your choice against the repeated calls and counsels of God. How *justly* therefore may God give you up to him, and leave you in his power to accomplish your ruin. Seeing you have yielded yourself to his will, to do as he would have you, surely God may leave you in his hands to execute his will upon you.

It would be perfectly *just*, should you have your portion with him with whom you have chosen your work; and that you should be in his possession to whose dominion you have yielded yourself: and if you cry to God for deliverance, he may most *justly* give you that answer, Judg. x. 14. *Go to the gods which ye have chosen.*

Consider too how often you have refused to hear God's calls to you; would it not therefore be *just* if God should
refuse

refuse to hear you when you call upon him? It may be, you are ready to say, “ I have done what I could ; I have prayed as earnestly as I am able ; I do not see how I can do more ; and it will seem hard if after all my suit is rejected.” But do you consider how often God has called, and you have denied him? God has called earnestly, he has called again and again, in his word, in his providence, by his ministers, and you have refused ; you would not attend to what he said : you had other business to mind : you had such and such lusts to gratify and please, and worldly concerns to attend. When the ministers of Christ stood and pleaded with you, how little was you moved by it ! It made no alteration in your conduct ; you went on as usual, and the language of your heart and practice was, *Exod. v. 2. Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?*—And yet, will it now be hard if God dont hear your calls, and that when your calling upon God be not from any respect to him, but meerly from self-love? The devil would beg as earnestly as you, and a thousand times more earnestly, if he had any hope of getting salvation by it, and yet be as much a devil as he now is. Was it no crime for you to refuse to hear when God called? or are your calls more worthy to be heard than God’s? What can have more *justice* in it than that in *Prov. i. 24.*—“ Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out mine hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you ; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”

Besides, have you not even taken encouragement to sin against God, upon that very presumption, that God would shew you mercy when you sought it? And may not God *justly* refuse you that mercy upon which you have so presumed?

sumed? You have flattered yourself with this, and this has made you bold to disobey God, namely, that though you did so, yet God would shew you mercy, when you cried earnestly for it. How *righteous* therefore would it be in God, were he to disappoint such a wicked presumption? It was upon that very hope, that you dared to affront the Majesty of heaven, so dreadfully as you have done; and can you now be so sottish as to think that it would be *unjust* in God to frustrate that hope.

When a sinner takes encouragement to neglect what God has commanded, and to gratify his lusts, thinking with himself, “If I do so, God *won't* damn me; he is a merciful God, and therefore when I seek his mercy he will bestow it upon me”—Must God be accounted cruel because he wont do according to such a sinner's *presumption*? Cant he be excused from shewing such a sinner mercy without incurring the charge of being *unjust*? If this be the case, God has no liberty to vindicate his own honour and majesty; but must lay himself open to all manner of affronts, must suffer the abuses of vile men, must let them disobey, despise, and dishonour him, as they please; and when they have done, his mercy and pardoning grace, must not be at his own disposal, but he must be obliged to dispense it at their call. What mean, low, and strange thoughts, have such men of God, who think thus of him! *

Consider that you have indulged yourself in disregarding God and his laws, and have opposed him the more, for his being a *merciful* God. So have you treated that attribute of God's mercy! How *just* is it therefore, that you never should have any benefit of that attribute!

* There is nothing more frequent among mankind than this abuse of the mercy of God; it is a common plea for continuance in practical wickedness: and there is nothing perhaps in which their guilt will appear more aggravated, and their damnation more *just* at the day of judgment, than in this particular sin.

There

There is something peculiarly heinous in sinning against the *mercy* of God. There is such base and horrid ingratitude in being the worse to God, because he is a Being of infinite goodness and grace, that it above all things renders wickedness vile and detestable. This ought to win and engage us to serve God better; but instead of that, to sin against him the more, *because* he is *merciful*, has something in it inexpressibly bad, which does in a peculiar manner enhance guilt, and provoke wrath; as seems to be intimated in Rom. ii. 4, 5. “Despiseſt thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the *goodness* of God leadeth thee to *repentance*: but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasureſt up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the *righteous* judgment of God.”

The greater the mercy of God is the more should you be engaged to love him, and live to his glory. But it has been quite contrary with you. You have heard that the mercy of God was without bounds, that it was sufficient to pardon the greatest sinner, and you have upon that very account, ventured to be a *very great* sinner. Though you heard that sin was infinitely hateful to God, and that your practices were exceeding opposite to his nature, will and glory, yet that did not make you uneasy: you heard that he was a merciful God, and so cared not how offensive your sins were to him. Now, how *just*, how *righteous* would it be if God should swear in his wrath, that you should never be the better for his being infinitely merciful.

Your ingratitude has been the greater, in that you have not only abused this attribute of God's mercy, but you have abused it under the supposition and persuasion that God would exercise infinite mercy *towards you, in particular*. This consideration ought *especially* to have endeared God to you; whereas you have taken encouragement from it to treat him with greater neglect and contempt.

Nor

Nor is this all—How have you risen up against God, and in the frame of your mind opposed him in his sovereign dispensations! And how *justly* upon that account might God set himself against you! You never yet would *willingly* submit to God, that he should have absolute dominion over the world, should govern it for his own glory and according to his own wisdom. You, a poor worm, a potsherd, a broken piece of an earthen vessel, have dared to find fault and to quarrel with God. Isa. xlv. 9. *Wo to him that striveth with his Maker!* Yet you have ventured to do it. Rom. ix. 20. *Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?* Yet you have taken upon you to call God to an account, *why* he does thus and thus; you have thought yourself *big enough* to say to JEHOVAH, *What dost thou?*

If you have been restrained by fear from *openly* venting your opposition and enmity of heart against God's government, yet it has been *in* you; you have had the heart of a viper *within*, and have been ready to spit venom at God: and it is likely you have sometimes actually done it, by tolerating blasphemous thoughts, and malignant risings of heart against him; yea, and the frame of your mind has often appeared in an impatient and fretful behaviour.

Now seeing you have thus *neglected, abused, and opposed* the great God, how *just* is it that he should oppose you! Or, is it because you are so much better, or so much greater than God, that it is a crime in God to make that opposition against you, which you do against him. What! do you think you ought to appropriate the liberty of making opposition to yourself, to claim it as your sole prerogative, so that you may be an enemy to God, but God must by no means be an enemy to you? Can you still dare to look to God with a challenge of mercy? Or, can you, who have such an heart, and have thus behaved yourself, still suppose that it would be *unjust* in God to leave you to perish with everlasting destruction from his presence?

If God should for ever cast you off, it would not only be agreeable to your treatment of him, but also to your treatment of Jesus Christ.

It would have been *just* in God had he cast you off, without making you the offer of a Saviour. But he hath not done so: he has provided a Saviour for sinners, and offered him to you; even his own Son Jesus Christ; who is the only Saviour of men. But you have treated this Saviour in such a manner, as that if God should eternally cast you off, it would be most agreeable to your behaviour towards him: which appears by this, viz.

“ That you reject Christ, and will not have him for your Saviour”——

If God offer you a Saviour, and you will not receive him, surely it is *just* that you should go *without a Saviour*. If when he has given an infinitely honourable and glorious Person, to be a sacrifice for sin, and this Saviour is offered to you, you refuse to accept of him, is God therefore *unjust* if he do not save you?

I am sensible you will be ready to say, “ I cannot see how this can be, that I am not willing that Christ should be my Saviour, when I would give all the world that he was my Saviour”——

Let me now endeavour to convince you that you are under a gross mistake in this matter.

There is a great difference between a willingness not to be damned, and a being willing to receive Christ for your Saviour. You have the former; doubtless you are willing to be saved from eternal misery. But that's a very different thing from being willing to come to Christ: you may love the deliverance, but hate the Deliverer. You talk of a *willingness*; but that willingness dont respect Christ, or the way of salvation by him, but it terminates wholly upon your escape from misery: the inclination of your will goes no farther than *self*; it never reaches Christ. You are willing not to be miserable; that is, you love yourself; and

there your will and choice terminate. 'Tis but a vain pretence and delusion to say you are willing to accept Christ.

Besides, that *willingness* you talk of, whereby you think you are willing to have Christ for a Saviour, is meerly a *forced* thing. Your heart dont go out after Christ *of itself*; but you are driven to seek an interest in him. Christ has no share at all in your *heart*, in your *affections*. Whereas he seeks entertainment in your *heart* and *choice*. And if you refuse *thus* to receive Christ, how *just* is it that he should refuse to receive you.

But the truth is, you really are not willing to have Christ for a Saviour—for—how is it possible you should be willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour from a punishment, which you are not sensible you have deserved? How can you be willing to have Christ as a Saviour from hell, if you are not sensible that you *deserve* everlasting burnings? You never yet had such a sense of your own sinfulness, and such a conviction of your great guilt in God's sight, as to acknowledge that you *justly* lay condemned to the punishment of hell. You never was convinced that you had forfeited *all favour* at the hands of God, and that you was at his *sovereign disposal*, to be either saved or destroyed, just as he pleased. From all which, it is evident, that you are not willing to accept Christ as a Saviour, or the way of salvation by him.

That you are not sincerely willing to accept Christ as your Saviour, appear by this, that you never have been convinced that he is sufficient for the work of your salvation. You have never had a sight or sense of the excellency or worthiness of Christ. And the sufficiency of Christ depends upon his excellency. It is because he is so excellent a Person, that his blood is of sufficient value to atone for sin, and 'tis hence that his obedience is so worthy in God's sight; that his intercession is so prevalent: those therefore who never had any spiritual sight or sense of Christ's excellency,

lency, cannot be sensible of his sufficiency. And as long as they are unconvinced of this, it is impossible they should be willing to accept of him as *their Saviour* and *Mediator*.

It is clear you are not willing to be saved by Christ, because you are not willing that your own goodness should be set at nought. In the way of salvation by Christ all human goodness is *wholly* set at nought, and made of no account *at all*. Whereas you make much of your prayers and duties, and of the pains you take in religion. How considerable they appear to you ! and how do you value yourself upon what you have done more than others ! Now, if you esteem what you do so highly yourself, it is impossible you should be heartily willing that God should make nothing of it. If a man is proud of his estate, his honourable office, or great abilities, it is impossible he should heartily approve, that others should make light of these things, and despise them.

Seeing then it is so evident that you refuse to accept of Christ as your Saviour, why is Christ to be blamed if he dont save you ? Christ has offered himself to be your Saviour, and you reject the way of salvation by him, will it not therefore be *just* if he leave you for ever destitute of the blessings and benefit of his salvation ?

By your rejection of Christ the additional guilt of the great sin of unbelief lies upon you. If you never had thus treated the Saviour, you might most *justly* have been damned to all eternity : it would but be exactly agreeable to your treatment of God. But besides this, when God has offered you his Son to save you from endless misery, and to make you eternally happy, and you refuse him, and will not have him for your Saviour ; what can render any person more inexcusable ? That God should lay help on his own Son, and that he should undertake for us, should come into the world, and assume our nature, should appear in a low estate, and die such a death, and endure such torment for sinners—How wonderful is it ! and what tongue or pen

can set forth the greatness of the ingratitude, the baseness, the perverseness there is in a sinner's rejecting so glorious a Person, when he comes on so gracious an errand! If you should now perish for ever, what can you have to say? Herein you have exceeded the very devils; for they never rejected the offers of such amazing mercy; no, nor of any mercy at all. This will be the distinguishing condemnation of gospel sinners, "He who hath not believed is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," John iii. 18.

If God should for ever cast you off and destroy you, it would be *agrecable to your treatment of others*. It would be exactly answerable to your behaviour towards your fellow-creatures, who have the same nature, and who are naturally in the same circumstances with you, and whom you ought to love as yourself.

For how *opposite* have you been in your spirit to the *salvation of others*. There are several ways in which natural men discover their opposition to the salvation of others. Sometimes by a fear that their companions, acquaintance and equals, will obtain mercy, and be unspeakably happier than they. It appears when persons envy others for it, dislike their conversation, and avoid their company. It frequently manifests itself in their backwardness to entertain charitable thoughts of them, in their readiness to listen to any thing that seems to contradict the reality of their piety, as pretended and hypocritical. The devil hated to own Job's sincerity, Job i. 7. ii. 3. There is very much of this spirit of the devil in natural men. It appeared in Cain who hated his brother because he was more acceptable to God than himself.

Thus have you been opposite to the salvation of others, who stand in as great need of it as yourself; not because their salvation would do you any hurt, or their damnation be any benefit to you, any otherwise than as it would gratify that vile spirit, so much like the spirit of the devil, who, because
he

he is miserable himself, is unwilling that others should be happy. How *just* therefore would it be if God should oppose your salvation! If you have so little love and mercy in you towards those, whom you have no cause to hate, but whom the law of God and of nature requires you to love; why is God bound to exercise infinite love and mercy to you, whom he is in no way bound to love, but who have deserved his hatred a thousand and a thousand times?—You are unwilling that God should bestow converting grace upon those whom you think vicious persons, who have behaved themselves injuriously to you, and whom you judge very unworthy of such mercy.—Is the unworthiness of others a *just* reason why God should not shew them mercy? and yet will it be *unjust*, if, notwithstanding all your unworthiness, he dont shew mercy to *you*?—You would have God bury all your faults, and blot out all your transgressions; but yet if he bestow mercy on others, it may be you will take that occasion of raking up all their old faults that you can think of. You dont condemn yourself for this baseness of spirit towards others; and will you quarrel with God, and condemn his dispensations, if he treat you as you have treated your fellow-creatures?—One would think that this consideration should for ever stop your mouth.

Consider too how you have promoted the damnation of others. How many by their bad examples, by corrupting the minds of others, by their sinful conversation, by leading them into sin, or by encouraging them in it, have been guilty of those things which have tended to the ruin of the souls of others. How many parents contribute to the damnation of their own children, by neglecting their education, by setting them bad examples, and by bringing them up in sinful ways. We have no reason to think but that many are cursed from day to day, by miserable spirits in hell, to whose damnation they have greatly contributed.—How *justly* then might God leave those to perish themselves, who have
had

had so little regard for the salvation, who have promoted the damnation of others !—

If God should eternally cast you off, it would but be *agreeable to your behaviour towards yourself*. And that in two respects. In being so *careless of your own salvation*, and in *wilfully taking direct methods to ruin yourself*.

You have refused to take care for your salvation as God has *counselled and commanded you* from time to time ; why then may not God neglect it ? Is God obliged to be more careful of your happiness, than you are of your own happiness, or of his glory ? Is God bound to take that care for you, out of love to you, which you wont take for yourself, either from love to yourself, or regard to his authority ? If God sees you going on in ways contrary to his commands, and to his glory, and requires you to forsake them, as tending to the destruction of your soul, and you refuse, how *just* would it be if God should be provoked by such conduct to be as careless of the good of your soul, as you are yourself !

You have also gone on in these practices which have directly tended to your destruction, and have been obstinate in it. You cannot plead ignorance ; you had all the light set before you that you could desire ; God told you that you was *undoing yourself* ; but yet you *would* do it. How *justly* therefore might God leave you to be *undone*. You have destroyed *yourself*, and that *wilfully*, contrary to God's repeated commands and counsels—how then can you blame any but yourself, if you are destroyed ? If you would drink poison, in contempt of God and of his advice, who can you blame but yourself if you are poisoned, and so perish ? If you would run into the fire against all restraints both of God's mercy and authority, you must e'en blame yourself if you are burnt.

Thus I have proposed to your consideration some things, which if you are not exceeding blind, senseless, and perverse, must stop your mouth, and convince you that you stand

justly

justly condemned before God; that he would in no wise deal hardly with you, but altogether *justly*, in denying you any mercy, in giving you over to Satan, and at last casting you into the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire, to be there to eternity, having no rest day or night, for ever glorifying his *justice* upon you, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

But here many may still object, (for I am sensible it is an hard thing to stop the mouths of sinners,) “God shews mercy to others, who have behaved themselves no better, yea, and who have done a great deal worse than I have.”

But does this prove that God is any way bound to shew mercy to you or to them either? If God does bestow it on others, he dont bestow it *on them* because he is bound to do it: he might if he had pleased, with *glorious justice*, have denied it them. If God bestow it *on some*, that dont prove that he is obliged to bestow it on *any*; and if he be not obliged to bestow it on *any*, then not upon *you*. God is in debt to none; and if he give to *some*, because it is his pleasure, that dont bring him in debt to *others*. It alters not the case at all as to you, whether others have it or not: you dont deserve damnation the less, than if mercy had never been shewn to any. Matt. xx. 15. “Is thine eye evil because I am good?”

Besides, if this objection were admitted, then the exercise of God's mercy is not in his own right, and his grace is not his own to give. That which God may not dispose of as he pleases, is not his own: it is impossible to give a debt. At this rate God cannot make a present of any thing; he has nothing of his own to bestow: if he has a mind to shew peculiar favour to some, or to lay some persons under particular obligations to him, he cannot do it; because he has no special gift, that his creatures stand in need of, and that would tend greatly to their happiness, at his own disposal.

If

If this be the case, why do you pray to God to bestow saving grace upon you? If God cannot in justice deny it you, because he bestows it on others, then it is not worth your while to pray and to intreat for it, God has bestowed it on others, as bad or worse than yourself, and therefore you may demand it as your due.—

What is it that you would make of God?—Must the great God be so tied up, as that he may not use his own pleasure in bestowing his own gifts, but if he bestow them on one, he must be obliged to bestow them on another? Is not God worthy to have the same right, with respect to the gifts of his grace, that a man has to his money or goods? Is it because God is not so great, and should be more in subjection than man, that this cannot be allowed him? If you think fit to shew kindness to a neighbour, do all the rest of your neighbours come to you, and tell you that you owe them so much as you have given to such a man?—But this is the way you deal with God! as though God were not worthy to have as absolute a property in his goods, as you have in yours! The thing at the bottom is, that you have low thoughts of God, and high thoughts of yourself. Matt. xx. 15. “Is it not lawful for me to do what I *will* with mine own?”

God may *justly* shew greater respect to others than to you, because you have shewn greater respect to others than to God. You have shewn greater respect to those who are infinitely inferior to God, than to him: you have rather chosen to offend God, than man. Nay, you have shewn greater regard to *wicked men*, than to God: you have honoured them more, loved them better, and adhered to them rather than to him. Yea, you have honoured the *devil* in many respects, more than God; you have practically preferred his will, his service, and his interest, to the will, the service, and the glory of God. You have chosen a little *worldly pelf*, rather than God; you have set more by a *vile lust*, than by him. You have chosen these things, and have set
your

your heart upon them instead of God: where now is the injustice if God be pleased to shew greater respect to others than to you, or if he chuse others and reject you. You have shewn great respect to others and not to God, whom you are laid under infinite obligations to respect above all; and why may not God shew respect to others and not to you, who have never laid him under the least obligation?—

And will you not be ashamed, notwithstanding all these things, still to open your mouth, to object and cavil about the decrees of God, and other things which you can't fully understand?—Let the decrees of God be what they will, it alters not the case as to your liberty, any more than if God had only foreknown. Your own conscience charges you with great guilt, and with those things which have been mentioned, let the secret things of God be what they will. Your conscience charges you with those vile dispositions, with that base behaviour towards God, which you would at any time most highly resent in your neighbour towards you. And still to object because there are some things in God's dispensations above your understanding, is exceeding unreasonable.—It is in vain for you to exalt yourself against an infinitely great and holy, and just God: if you continue in it, it will be to your eternal shame and confusion, when you shall hereafter see at whose door all the blame of your misery lies.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

USE I. In the improvement of this doctrine, I would first direct myself to sinners who have so much reason to be afraid of damnation, in a use of *conviction*. This may be matter of conviction to you, that it would be *just* with God eternally to reject and destroy you. The sentence of condemnation lies against you; you are in God's hands, and it

is uncertain what he will do with you. You have reason to tremble every moment, and to be afraid that eternal burnings will be your portion. But let your fears be ever so great, let damnation be ever so dreadful, yet it is *just*. Though eternal damnation be what you can't bear, and though your heart shrinks at the thoughts of it, yet God might be *just*, *holy*, and *glorious*, in executing it upon you. If you think otherwise, 'tis a sign you don't see your own sinfulness, nor the *sinfulness of sin*. Therefore, for your conviction, be directed,

To look over your past life. Enquire at the mouth of conscience, what it has to testify concerning it. Consider what you are, what light you have had, and how you have behaved yourself. How have the many days, and months, and years, which have rolled over your head been spent! How many sorts of wickedness have you been guilty of! How manifold have been the abominations of your life! What profane conversation! What contempt of God and rebellion against him! What worldly, what vain, what unprofitable, what immoral thoughts have you indulged! How much time have you spent in gratifying your lusts! How have you neglected the sacred scriptures, public worship, and private prayer. And what you have done alone, what wicked practices there have been done in secret, God and your consciences can testify!

How often have you disobeyed your parents, yea, and refused to be subject to them! How far have you been from paying that honour to them which God has required! And 'tis well if you have not mocked them behind their backs!—Is it not a wonder of forbearance and mercy, that what is written in Prov. xxx. 17. has not been accomplished on you? “The eye that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.”——

What

What revenge and malice have you been guilty of towards your neighbours ! How have you indulged the spirit of the devil, hating others, and wishing evil to them ; rejoicing when evil befel them, and grieving at their prosperity !

What covetousness has been in many of you ! Such has been your inordinate love of the world, and your care about the things of it, that it has engrossed your heart, and left no room for God and religion. For the vanities of the world, you have neglected reading, prayer, and meditation. For the world you have cast God, and Christ, and heaven behind your back. You have minded the world more than the glory of God, or your own salvation !

How much of a spirit of pride has appeared in you ! This is in a peculiar manner the spirit and condemnation of the devil. How have some of you vaunted yourselves in your apparel ! Others in their riches ! Others in their abilities ! How unwilling are you to give others their due honour ! And how have you shewn your pride by setting up your own wills and in opposing others !——

How sensual have you been ! Are there not some who have debased themselves below the dignity of human nature, by wallowing in sensual filthiness, as swine in the mire ! How much of your precious time has been spent in scenes of pleasure, of riot, and intemperance, when you ought to have been at home seeking God, and your salvation in your families and in your closets !

What abominable lasciviousness have you been guilty of ! How have you indulged yourself in all manner of unclean imaginations ! With what unclean acts and practices have you defiled yourselves ! What lewd company have you kept, wherein were things not fit to be spoken, and in which you have taken great delight ! How have you corrupted others as well as yourselves by the abominations you have committed in company, and in the dark ! Such the apostle had respect to in Eph. v. 12. “ For it is a shame even to speak of those

things which are done of them in secret." Thus have you corrupted others, and done what in you lay to undo their souls; and by your vile practices and examples, you have made room for satan, invited his presence, and established his interest among those where you have lived.

What lying have some of you been guilty of, especially in your childhood! And have not your hearts and lips often disagreed, since you came to riper years? What fraud, deceit, and unfaithfulness, have many of you practiced in your dealings with your neighbours, to which your own heart is conscious! if you have not been noted for it by others.

How have some of you behaved yourselves to your relations! How have you neglected their eternal interests, as well as the souls of your own children! And instead of training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, have rather brought them up in the service of satan.

How have you attended the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper, without any serious preparation, and in a careless frame of spirit! Living, it may be, at the same time in ways of known sin, and intending to go on in these wicked practices. You have come even to that holy feast of love, with the leaven of malice and envy in your heart; and so have eaten and drank judgment to yourselves.

What stupidity and sottishness have attended your course of wickedness! Which have appeared in your obstinacy under awakening dispensations of God's word and providence. And how have some of you backslidden, after you have set out in religion, notwithstanding all the strivings of God's spirit with you!

Now, can you think when you have thus behaved yourself, that God is obliged to shew you any mercy? Are you not ashamed after all this to talk of its being *unjust* in God to cast you off? Does it become you who have lived such a life, to open your mouth to excuse yourself, or to object against the *justice* of God in *your condemnation*; or to complain

plain if he dont give you pardoning grace, and bestow upon you eternal life ; or to talk of your duties and great pains in religion, as if such performances were worthy to be accepted, and to draw God's heart to such a creature?—If this has been your manner, let it serve to convince you, what mean thoughts you have entertained of God, how little you have considered yourself, and how little a sense you have had of your own exceeding sinfulness.

USE II. A second use in the application of this subject, shall be in a way of *caution* to unconverted sinners, not to improve the doctrine to discouragement. For though it would be righteous in God for ever to cast you off, and to destroy you, yet it will also be just in God to save you, in and through Christ, who has made compleat satisfaction for sin. Rom. iii. 25, 26. “ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood, to declare his *righteousness*, that he might be *just*, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.” God may through this Mediator, not only *justly*, but *honourably*, shew you mercy. The blood of Christ is so precious, and of such value, that it is fully sufficient to pay the debt you have contracted, and perfectly to vindicate the divine Majesty from all the dishonour cast upon it by your many and great sins. It was a much greater thing for Christ to die, than it would have been for you and all mankind to have burnt in hell to all eternity. Of such dignity and excellence is Christ in the sight of God, that he is willing to be at peace with sinners for his sake, however vile and unworthy they have been. So that you need not be at all discouraged from seeking mercy, for there is enough in Christ.

It would not indeed become the glory of God's Majesty, to shew mercy to you who have been so sinful a creature, for any of your worthless prayers and despicable performances. He will shew mercy *only* on Christ's account, and according to his *sovereign pleasure*, on *whom* he pleases, *when* he pleases, and

and *in what manner* he pleases. You can't bring him under obligation by your works; do what you will, he will not look upon himself as obliged. But if it be his pleasure, he can honourably shew mercy through Christ, to the chief of sinners.

Here is encouragement therefore for you still to seek and wait, notwithstanding all your wickedness; agreeable to Samuel's speech to the children of Israel, when their guilt stared them in the face, 1 Sam. xii. 20. "Fear not; ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord; but serve the Lord with all your hearts."

USE III. The last improvement of this doctrine, shall be, very briefly to put the godly in mind of the freeness and wonderfulness of the grace of God towards them. *For such were some of you.* You had such a wicked heart, you lived such a wicked life, as you have heard; and it would have been most *just* in God for ever to have cast you off: but he has had mercy upon you; he hath made his glorious grace appear in your salvation. You had no love to God, but he has exercised unspeakable love to you. You have contemned God, and set light by him, yet he has redeemed you at the price of the blood of his dear Son. You was ungrateful for past mercies, yet God has bestowed upon you unspeakably greater mercies. You have neglected your own salvation, and rejected the Saviour, but God has not rejected you, nor neglected your salvation. God has magnified his grace towards you, and not to others; because he hath chosen you, and it hath pleased him to set his love upon you.

O what cause is here for praise! What obligations are upon you to bless the Lord, who hath dealt bountifully with you, and to magnify his holy name. What cause have you to adore him in humility, to walk humbly before God, and to be conformed to that in Ezek. xvi. 63.

"That

“ That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God !” You should never open your mouth in boasting, or self-justification : you should lie the lower before God for his mercy to you. But you have reason, the more abundantly for your past sins, to open your mouth in God’s praises, that they may be continually in your mouth, both here and to all eternity, for his rich, unspeakable, and sovereign mercy to you, whereby He, and He alone, hath made you to differ from others. To Him, as to Three Persons in One self-existent Godhead, be ascribed blessing, honour, glory, love, and salvation, for ever and ever. Hallelujah, Amen.

F I N I S.