

A T H A N K S G I V I N G
S E R M O N
O N T H E

Happy Recovery of His MAJESTY
from His late Indisposition.

Preached by Command of His Excellency the LORD LIEUTENANT,

B Y T H E

Hon. and Right Rev. Dr. Wm. BERESFORD,
Lord Bishop of OSSORY,

In the CATHEDRAL of CHRIST-CHURCH,

On the 23d of APRIL,

Before His Excellency the LORD LIEUTENANT, and both
HOUSES of PARLIAMENT.

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S E R M O N, &c.

2 CORINTHIANS, Chap. 9. Verse 15.

Thanks be to God, for his unspeakable Gift.

WHEN God made Man, he was graciously pleased to implant in his Breast a Disposition to many useful and amiable Virtues, the Practice of which was designed to constitute and promote, not only his own Happiness, but that of his Fellow-Creatures during their Abode in this World. At the same Time God saw it fit to render Man a dependent Creature; he exposed him to numberless Dangers and Distresses, which no Sagacity of his own could foresee, no Power within himself could repel, or defend him from; hence arose the Necessity of mutual good Offices, and hence arose the Reasonableness of the shining Virtue of Gratitude.

Into

Into the Nature of this indispensable Duty I propose here to enquire ; and then, to consider, for what particular Benefits we are in a more especial Manner obliged to be thankful.

Gratitude then is a warm and lively Emotion arising from a Sense of some Benefit received, or designed to be conferred upon us ; I add the Word *designed*, because, though the Benefit designed should happen never to reach us, the Intention alone is as well entitled to our Gratitude, as the actual Presence of the Benefit.

There are some Qualifications, however, necessary to entitle the Benefactor to our full Gratitude ; for it is not every Thing, that seems a Favor, that can claim this Return from us. False Friendship may hold out many alluring Offers to betray us, and what seemed a mighty Kindness may, if accepted, lead us to inevitable Ruin. We should always take Care to examine well the Motive of the Benefactor, and if he is found pure and disinterested, then may we deem him a true Benefactor.

Hence it appears, that our unreserved Gratitude is first and always due to Almighty God. This great Being cannot be benefited by us, and of Course whatever Blessings

Blessings he thinks fit to bestow upon us, must ever flow from his own free Will and Pleasure, they are unmerited, and by us can never be returned : By him we were called into Existence ; by him we are supported and preserved in it ; to him alone, in all our Distresses and Difficulties we can reasonably look up for Comfort and Assistance ; and these he will not fail to afford us, if our Want of Faith in him, or other Sins do not stand in the Way, and intercept them. Every Moment of our Lives must convince us of the numberless Favours of God to us, for all which, he requires nothing, but our Obedience to his most Holy Laws ; and those Thanks, which he so well deserves, and which it is so easily in our Power to offer up to him : To withhold those Thanks is not only the highest Folly, but is also the most offensive Sin.

Ingratitude has been judged, at all Times, and among all People, the greatest Disgrace of human Nature ; it has been ever branded by the most odious Appellations ; and the Man, who is capable of it, is held out as an Object of universal Detestation : It has appeared, not as a single Sin, but a Completion of all Sins ; a total Corruption of our Nature, and an entire Dereliction of every Virtue whatsoever.

It has been thought strange, that this Sin, so odious in its Nature, and so destructive of the Good of Society, has never been punished by human Laws ; whilst others, of a far less horrid Complexion, have been proscribed, and followed by due Punishment. The Reason probably may be, that it is impossible to the Penetration of human Judges to discern, and ascertain exactly the Measure of this Crime.

Many Circumstances may aggravate, many may alleviate the Guilt of it. There is only one Being then in the Universe, who is perfectly competent to the Cognizance of it, even God himself, who alone knows the Motives and Springs of all our Actions, and who alone is perfectly acquainted with the Workings of the human Heart, to him therefore let us leave the Punishment of Ingratitude, and apply our best Endeavours to avoid the Guilt of it.

Have we then received Blessings from the Almighty, and shall we be unmindful or unthankful for them ? God forbid ; such a Conduct may indeed justly provoke him to hide his Face from us, and to leave us, helpless as we are, to struggle, vainly to struggle with the many Miseries that continually surround us. What then are we to do to conciliate the Favor of Almighty God, to prevail
upon

upon him to continue the Blessings, which he has already vouchsafed to us, or to restore those, which for our Sins, he hath for a Time withdrawn from us? It is plain, that for this Purpose, we should do all that is in our Power; but alas! our Power is very small and insignificant; happy for us, however, it is that God knows this, and will be ever ready to accept our sincere Endeavours. Has God been merciful to us, and shall we withhold from him our most humble and unfeigned Thanks? God forbid; a strong and grateful Sense of his Favors is our most bounden Duty.

But there is also another Duty, which ought to accompany this Service of ^{our} Hearts and Lips, and without which, the former will appear a very poor and imperfect Sacrifice. Has God then been signally kind to us? Let us imitate, as well as we may, the great Example. Has he made us rejoice, when our Hearts were depressed with Sorrow? Let us cast an Eye of Pity, and hasten to the Relief of our suffering Brethren. Cold, and ill prepared for Joy is that Heart, which pines under the Pressure of Indigence, and whose Feelings are engrossed by the daily Care of providing a scanty Maintenance; let us, by our seasonable Charity, expand the miserable Heart, and make it capable of receiving and enjoying the Blessings which swell our own Hearts. This, we may be sure, will be a Sacrifice, best pleasing to God, *that* God, whose
 Mercy

Mercy is over all his Works ; who is interested in the Happiness of all his Creatures ; but who, for the wisest Purposes dispenses the good Things of this World in unequal Portions, to try the Virtue of suffering Patience, and give to Liberality the happy Opportunity of relieving the Wretchedness, which he is pleased to inflict on many.

I come now to consider what these Blessings are, for which, we are more especially called upon, to give Thanks to Almighty God. As we are Members of Society, the most important Blessings, are those, no Doubt, in which the Interest of the whole Society is concerned ; and of those, the first and dearest is Religion, as it not only materially influences our Happiness here, but all our Hopes of Happiness in a better and more durable State hereafter.

Here our Hearts must overflow with Gratitude, (the first Divine Principal I set out with) when we reflect, that we are indulged in the Profession of the *purest* Religion in the World ; a Religion, free from the wild Fears of Superstition, and the *narrow* and mean Schemes of Bigotry ; a Religion, without Spot or Blemish, like its great Author, supported only by Truth, and the Conviction, which arises from the closest and most candid Examination. What a Blessing such a Religion is, must appear to any one, who
but

but a little reflects, what Miseries are the constant Attendants on Scepticism and Infidelity ; this, I say, I leave to every Man's impartial Judgment, and Experience.

The next Things dear to Men as reasonable Creatures, and Members of Society, are, the secure Enjoyment of what are prized their most valuable Possessions, their Liberties, their Lives, and their Properties ; here again we must lift up our Hearts with Thanks to Almighty God, as we live under a Government, which protects all those invaluable Rights, as far, as the Uncertainty and Fluctuation of human Affairs can possibly admit ; a Constitution of Civil Government, whose Benefits and Privileges no one can forfeit, except by his own Demerits ; unknown to any other Country in the Annals of History, the Boast of none, and the Envy of all, who have any Knowledge of its Excellence ; a Constitution regulated only by Laws, and those Laws made by the very Persons, who are to be governed by them : A Form of Government, whose sole Tendency is the *Punishment of evil Doers, and the Praise of them that do well.* It would be superfluous to enlarge further on the Excellence of our happy Constitution, to Persons so well, and so long acquainted with it ; let us therefore turn our Thoughts from the Contemplation of it, however delightful, to the Occasion of this Day's Solemnity.

Here we shall find fresh, and ample Cause for our Gratitude to the Father of all Mercies, for restoring our beloved Sovereign to a perfect Capacity of exercising his just and gentle Rule over us. It is usual to the human Heart to receive back with Transport, an Object, which it was apprehensive of losing, and about which its Anxiety was strongly employed; and the Joy is ever in Proportion to the Apprehensions. This Effect, no Doubt, will be produced in the Breasts of all the Subjects in our beloved Sovereign's extensive Dominions. They feared much for him, because they loved him much, and their Joy upon his Recovery must be great in Proportion.

Unfeeling indeed must that Heart be, which is insensible of the Blessings, we enjoy under a Monarch, who, during his whole Reign, has made the Laws alone the Measure of his Administration; whose Justice has ever been unimpeached, and whose Mercy is only limited by the Safety and Welfare of the People, which Providence has committed to his Care, and for whose Protection, his unwearied Vigilance is ever exerted, who may stand forth, as the Prophet Samuel did among the Jews, and say, “ Whose Ox
 “ have I taken, or whose Ass have I taken, or whom have
 “ I defrauded, whom have I oppressed, or of whose Hand
 “ have

“ have I received any Bribe to blind mine Eyes therewith?
 “ and I will restore it.” A Monarch, who sets an Exam-
 ple to the World, of the most genuine and unaffected Piety;
 and of the most rare and unexampled Affection in the
 various Relations of domestic Life; and whose entire Con-
 duct stands forth a Vindication of that pure Mode of the
 Christian Faith established throughout his Dominions. Such
 is the King, whom God has been pleased to restore to the
 ardent Wishes and Prayers of his People. What Return
 shall we make to the Almighty for all these Benefits, which
 he has bestowed upon us? All the Return, which we can
 make, and which he will graciously accept, is our warm,
 and unfeigned Thanks for them, accompanied by a full
 Sense of our own Unworthiness, and his great Goodness.
 This will naturally and necessarily lead us to an impartial
 Consideration of our Lives and Manners, and a thorough
 Reformation in both; this is the Sacrifice, with the sweet
 smelling Savour of which God will be best pleased, and
 upon which alone we can found any rational Hopes of the
 Continuance of these Blessings amongst us. Praise there-
 fore and Glory be to the King of Kings, for ever and ever,
 and let all the People say, Amen.

When a Tyrant falls, Men rejoice, as delivered from
 the grievous Pressure of Plague, Pestilence, or Famine,

those dreadful Scourges, which God, in his Wrath, sometimes sends upon a sinful World. A Tyrant is the fiercest Enemy of Mankind, hating and detesting all, and by all hated and detested; his Breath is baneful and destructive to those, who are so unfortunate as to be within its Influence, as the Tempests of the North to the new Off-spring of the Spring; his hardened Heart knows not how to spare, and Virtue is his perpetual Reproach and Aversion. Far, very far different is the Character of a Patriot King, the true and well accepted Substitute of the Ruler of the World. His Heart is a Stranger to the Triumphs of Cruelty; and he ever wishes rather to correct and amend than to punish; though he regards his People with the excusable and fond Partiality of a Parent, yet his Benevolence embraces all Mankind; he is a true Citizen of the World, and the Cause of Humanity he never fails to adopt, as his own Cause. He loves not War, that destroying Demon; but when restless Ambition presumes to disturb the common Peace, he nobly puts himself forward, and vindicates with just Arms the invaded Rights of Mankind.

Such is the King, (for I must again repeat it) whom God in his Mercy has restored to the earnest Wishes and Prayers of his happy People; let *that* People then lift up their Hearts and Hands with most grateful Thanks to the
 Giver

Giver of all Good, for this singular Mercy, and let them say with the Royal Psalmist; “ O that Men would therefore praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he doeth for the Children of Men.” To him then be everlasting Glory and Honour, both now and for ever.

F I N I S.