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S E R M O N,

P R E A C H E D

U P O N T H E O C C A S I O N,

O F T H E

G E N E R A L

T H A N K S G I V I N G,

F O R T H E L A T E

P E P A C E,

J U L Y 29th. 1784.

By the Rev. WILLIAM KEATE, M. A.
Formerly FELLOW of *King's College*, CAMBRIDGE, and
RECTOR of PIDDLE-HINTON, *Dorsetshire*.

B A T H;

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To the Rev. William Hayward Roberts, D. D. Provost,
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Rev. Thomas Chamberlayne, M. A.
Rev. John Young, D. D.
Rev. Edward Tew, M. A.
Rev. John Norbury, D. D.
Rev. William Barford, D. D.

FELLOWS of ETON COLLEGE;

This DISCOURSE,

Is with all Humility,

And with great Gratitude

I N S C R I B E D ;

By their very obliged,

And obedient Servant,

The AUTHOR.



A S E R M O N, &c.

PHILIPPIANS, CHAP. iv. 6.

Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

WHEN Jerufalem was again repeopled after the captivity, and, under the direction of Nehemiah, the fervice of the Temple was re-eftablifhed; we read that “Mattaniah was appointed the principal “to begin the Thankfgiving in prayer.” In the Jewifh ritual we may learn by this, that prayer and Thankfgiving went together, or fucceeded each other. The words of St. Paul, juft read to you, juftify the practice among the firft Christians; and other paffages of Scripture confirm the propriety of their infeparable connection: “I exhort that firft of all, fupplicati-

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ons,

“ ons, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be
 “ made for all men.” “ Continue in prayer, and
 “ watch in the same with Thanksgiving.” Our own
 Liturgy, tho’ prayer be its chief subject, would be
 defective without Thanksgiving; and accordingly it
 makes one, but not the leading part, in our system
 of Devotions. But tho’ both are thus intimately uni-
 ted; and tho’ by prayer, in its largest acceptation,
 Thanksgiving may not unfrequently be understood;
 (as Faith in a general and Christian sense will include
 obedience) yet every one at the first view will readi-
 ly observe, that these duties are by no means similar.
 It will be requisite therefore to treat them separately,
 and to shew the reasonableness and efficacy of each:
 For in fact they are totally distinct services; the one
 is subsequent to the other, and as widely different as
 what is to come is from what is past; prayer being a
 petition for what we want, and in futurity; Thankf-
 giving an acknowledgment, for what we have receiv-
 ed in times before, or are actually enjoying in the
 present instant.

By

By all who acknowledge a God, and a Providence in the world, the duty of Thanksgiving is not disputed; but the propriety of prayer does not so readily find admission; and we are accused of attempting to instruct the Almighty, in what he requires no information, and of soliciting with restless importunity, what we have no warrant to expect, and what God, if he saw it expedient, would readily grant without our solicitations: In answer to this we admit that God is the only judge of the reasonableness of our complaints, and of the expediency of their redress; but Man being a dependent and helpless creature, and conscious of his own insufficiency, it becomes him to look beyond his own powers for protection; being oppressed with the load of his iniquities, to pray for remission of them upon his sincere repentance. But where is he to expect protection, unless from the Arm of the Almighty? Who can remit sins, but God alone? Prayer therefore is a duty; not to inform the Deity in what he is not ignorant; not to solicit favours which we are not authorized to ask; nor to feel ourselves hurt at the

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disappoint-

disappointment, when God is not disposed to confer them : but as a general confession of our dependence, and as a public acknowledgment of God, as our Creator and Preserver. The question which may not unreasonably be asked is this; Are our petitions conveyed with the most suitable address? Do we attend how we pray? A solution of this question may obviate perhaps some of the principal objections, with which our adversaries reproach us.

All application to the Almighty for relief should be expressed in the most general terms, and the mode of that relief left entirely to his wise disposal. Confession and repentance for sins may descend to every individual transgression, which conscience may bring to our remembrance ; for every sin is subject to punishment, and requires its distinct sorrow and contrition; but particular addresses for the divine mercies have the appearance of prescribing to Providence; and discover more of the importunate solicitor, than of the modest supplicant. It is required that petitions be presented with the most humble
submission,

submission, and the event acquiesced in with pious resignation; but the manner, in which many addresses for exclusive benefits are offered up, seems impertinently to dictate to the Almighty, and to direct his wisdom in the distribution of his favours. The request which we may prefer, as supposed to be immediately beneficial, might in its consequences be disadvantageous to ourselves, and to others fatal: what might be thought expedient in our partial and contracted view, may in the all-comprehensive eye of God be seen pregnant with mischief, and generally destructive. Petitions for instance from one place for a moderate supply of showers, may be directly repugnant to a request equally reasonable for their discontinuance from another: Even from the same place different persons shall have their different wants, and yet all will expect an indulgence to their petitions: Nay it is observable that the very persons who presented the addresses, are commonly the first to be dissatisfied, and the most impatient in their prayers for a temporary change. Can Providence be expected to listen to such capricious, such contradictory applications?

applications? If all were complied with, what confusion would ensue! endless discontentment, and complaints innumerable. But it is our great happiness that God sees not as man sees; that his superintendance is not local, or partially confined to a peculiar people: his protection is universal, his mercies are over all his works.

But are not particular Prayers directed by the Church for particular persons, and on particular Occasions? I would not be understood as meaning to imply censure, on what the wisdom of our rulers has established. They are justified in these directions, and they have the authority of Scripture for enforcing them; but some even of these are not exclusively for our own advantage, and others are left discretionary. Prayers for success against our enemies in battle, or for deliverance in times of general contagion, tho' occasional, have a general tendency, and are not subject to the imputation of selfish partiality: Prayers for the chief Magistrate, as the common father of his people, are with propriety addressed to the common Father of
all.

all. Prayers for our brethren, and even for our enemies, all upon the whole that are unmixed with our own immediate concerns, that are general in their application, and general in the effects desired, are duties upon all and our reasonable service: but prayers that seem to point out the precise time, or the exact mode of granting the relief, that have reference only to self, and are limited to the narrow circle of our private necessities, our local interests, or capricious inclinations, are an insult to the divine Providence, unauthorized by Scripture, and highly contradictory to the great example of our Saviour; whose prayer, intended as a model for our addresses, is universally adapted to all times, to all places, and to all conditions, the most general in design, the most comprehensive in extent.

As the reasonableness therefore of prayer, thus properly directed, has been, I should hope, sufficiently ascertained, the proofs of its efficacy are no less conclusive. That its fruits are not always visible, is no argument that they are not real: instant and sensible

ble effects seldom follow the supplications of the most devout: the example of Elias will not warrant us in presuming upon such immediate success: we expect no miracles to be wrought in favour of human intercessions. The completion of our wishes is no ground for boasting; we do ill to be angry at disappointments: our prayers may be rejected without marks of the divine displeasure; they may be effectually complied with, without any apparent distinction from God's favour. But the Scripture assures us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much:" and if prosperity, tho' not always in the form we had pictured to our fancy, attends our undertakings; if calamities, those we had dreaded as the most formidable, are averted, or turn eventually to our good; if the issue of our lives has upon the whole been fortunate, failing perhaps in one instance, and exceeding our most sanguine expectations in another; if tender affections, charitable dispositions, and holy resolutions be wrought in our hearts; if habitual and uniform obedience be produced in our actions; and the whole frame and temper of our

minds

minds be softened, as it can scarce be hardened, by this exercise; the end of prayer is attained; we “asked, and it was given us; we fought, and we “have found;” not perhaps the very object we were seeking, nor in the precise instant that we asked; but as much probably as we desired, certainly more than we deserved. “I will therefore that men pray every “where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and “doubting;” with charity to men, and with confidence in God.

The reasonableness and efficacy of prayer, thus summarily explained, my subject calls me to another, and as necessary a part of our religious service; and which, though seldom denied to be a duty, is in practice grown almost obsolete. We are all more unhappily inclined to prayer than to praise; to consider more what our desires want of their completion, than the gratification with which they have been indulged: cherished by hope and magnified by the imagination, the object which we pray for has commonly something new to engage our attention, and to animate us in

the pursuit: the redress we have received seldom comes up to expectation; the impressions made by it at first, every day grow fainter, and recur to the mind as the distant remembrance of an enjoyment that is past, and can never be revived. And yet, however readily we have recourse to supplication, thanksgiving is in some cases the more practicable duty: in the extremity of sickness, when the spirits are oppressed, and the faculties impaired, the mind is not in a condition to make intercession with its God; but Thanksgiving is generally in our power; for it is only when his mercies have been displayed, and the mind is capable of acknowledging them, that this tribute is expected. True it is that God expects some return for all these voluntary mercies; and the only return which man can make to his Creator, is gratitude: yet how reluctantly is it offered! How ungraciously withheld! However unwillingly it be received, truth compels me to declare the fact, that tho' the prayers of this congregation have been desired for many in their supposed dangers, I have known but few, very few instances, where praises
and

and thanksgivings have been offered up to God, when the danger was removed. “Were there not
 “ ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There re-
 “ turned not to give glory to God, save this stranger.”

Prayer and Thanksgiving differ so materially, that it may be thought unnecessary to discriminate them: but to mention only a few striking particulars, might not be foreign to the subject, nor wholly uninstruc-
 tive. The effects of our petitions are either intend-
 ed to center wholly in ourselves, to be confined to
 our private connections, in preference to strangers,
 or to be extended only to our own, to the prejudice
 of all other countries; in all which, or even if they
 be carried farther, to all mankind, self is evidently
 included, and forms generally the point of attracti-
 on to the whole circle; but Thanksgiving is more
 disinterested, and makes the honour that is due to
 others the immediate object of its regard, its own
 concerns more distantly, and as a secondary confi-
 deration. The immediate and ultimate end of pray-
 er is either directly or indirectly the personal interest

of every supplicant: The end of Thanksgiving is to disclaim all merit in ourselves, and to promote the glory of his name of whom are all things.

Thanksgiving also has this advantage, that it is never accompanied with any painful retrospect, and is as pleasing in the performance, as disinterested in its views. Prayer, confession, and repentance, are gloomy and dispiriting in themselves, and throw a melancholy and dark shade over every thing that is near them: Thanksgiving on the contrary is lively and animating, and reflects a cheerfulness and lustre on all the objects within its influence: *The former are the language of indigence and guilt; the latter the effusions of contentment, and peace of conscience: Prayer, confession, and repentance are dictated by our fears, or by hopes, if hope ever comes, full of anxiety and depressing doubts; Thanksgiving arises from the pure sources of love, and of enjoyment; of “perfect love that casteth out fear,” and of enjoyment unattended by remorse: those may
produce

*Atterbury.

produce some temporary calm to a mind distracted with its sins, but a calm too frequently succeeded by despair, and distrust in God's assurances: this on the other hand enjoys a perpetual serenity, and dares to look up with confidence to Heaven, that its praises are accepted: in short, prayer, confession, and repentance are the service of the sinner imploring pardon; Thanksgiving the service of the just, who are receiving their reward; the blessed employment of the Angels that are in Heaven.

Prayer and Thanksgiving are in this respect also essentially distinct, that as prayer cannot be too general, thanksgiving, like repentance and confession (which resemble it only in this one point) cannot be too particular. As by confession and repentance, we acknowledge and bewail, not only our sins and wickedness in the gross, but every single instance of depravity, of which our own hearts shall accuse us; so by Thanksgiving we acknowledge and record with gratefulness every separate act of God's mercy, which we had no title to expect, and which God
might

might without injustice have with-held. The favours of God are perfectly optional on his part, and every peculiar indulgence, demands on ours its peculiar and perpetual remembrance.

A separate acknowledgment indeed of these divine favours, must be left to every man's own bosom: they are scarcely within the recollection of any man at all times, and are clearly not the business of this place, or of this assembly; for they are like the sand upon the sea-shore, innumerable, constantly renewed, and continual in operation. The general effects of the divine Providence demand a general remembrance, and unremitting thankfulness; indiscriminate Thanksgiving therefore we hope will be accepted, where a distinct enumeration of every benefit would be impracticable. But when any signal instance of deliverance has been wrought among the people; when a year of richness and abundance succeeds a time of barrenness and scarcity; when parched by intemperate heat "the hills are water-
" ed from above, and the clouds drop fatness;" or
when

when after immoderate uninterrupted rains, the all restoring light of the sun revisits us, and the fruits of the earth are gathered in their due season; when again after some dreadful visitation by the pestilence or sickness “the blessings of health are restored into our dwellings;” or when surrounded by enemies, and oppressed by the calamities of war, the mercy of God sends peace into the world, and “stilleth the “raging of the nations;” then it is that the voice of joy shall be heard aloud in the congregation, and the name of the Lord exalted among the people: these are the occasions that strike the more forcibly as they are more uncommon; that awaken our feelings by the liveliness of their present impressions, and urgently call for their immediate and distinct acknowledgment.

Infinite are the blessings for which we are at this time peculiarly bound to “offer unto God Thanks; “giving;” that he hath given us (with some occasional interruptions that may turn to our profit) every kind influence of the Heavens when it was most
wanted;

wanted; “the former and the latter rain in their
 “season;” the mellowing frosts of winter, and the in-
 vigorating heats of summer; that he hath dispersed
 plenty through the land, “and crowned the year
 “with his goodnefs:” “O that men would therefore
 “praise the Lord for his goodnefs, and declare the
 “wonders that he doeth for the children of men!”
 But the occasion above all that now calls for our at-
 tention, is to commemorate the glad tidings of peace
 to these kingdoms; the blessed return of harmony
 and agreement among the nations.

A period to the miseries of war is an event at all
 times devoutly to be wished; and in our situation,
 essential to our existence: perseverance in contention,
 were it left to our choice to terminate its ravages, had
 been voluntary suicide. With one, and no inconfi-
 derable part of its dominions, dismembered from its
 connection, and with three of the first powers of Eu-
 rope unnaturally combined, and confederated against
 her, the struggle of one island, however glorious,
 must be unavailing: the sparks of virtue not quite
 extinguish-

extinguished, gave a transient, but ineffectual flash of hope; and all our exertions, tho' honourable to ourselves, and astonishing to the world, served only the more surely to depress us, and to hasten our dissolution. To extricate us from this host of difficulties, Peace, tho' unfavourable, could not be unwelcome, could hardly be disadvantageous; and happy in the comparison should we yet esteem our condition, that some interruption is given to the career of our enemies, some respite allowed from that trying affliction, an unsuccessful war. Whether wearied with defeats we were too hasty to conclude the war; whether a vanquished people could have insisted on conditions less dishonourable; or whether the terms of this peace, be guarded against all objections, and preclude every opening for evasion; are questions merely of political concernment, and ill suited to a discussion from this place. Complaints possibly of various kinds may be alledged, of unwarranted concessions, of allies deserted, and of boundaries undefined; for there never was yet peace made, however exalted, or however humbled our condition, that

D.

could

could give perfect satisfaction, that was not thought too humiliating even in defeat, or inadequate to our success. But that we are at this time safe from all the horrors and devastations of contending armies; that the blood of thousands is no longer sacrificed to flatter ambition, or to gratify revenge; that the treasures of an exhausted people are no more lavished on desperate projects and ruinous expeditions; these are some compensation for all the evils we have so sorely felt; and should make us truly and unfeignedly thankful, that peace on any terms has condescended to revisit us. Glory therefore be to God that there is peace on earth.

Alarming still and melancholy is the prospect which we have before us: oppressed with the magnitude of an enormous debt, weighed down with the load of complicated, but necessary burdens, how are we to emerge from the torrent that overwhelms us? The distractions occasioned by violent parties from within; the watchful jealousy of our natural enemies from without; the desertion of friends unsatisfied by

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concessions ; and the mercenary selfishness of every rank ; all conspire to the overthrow of this once flourishing state, tottering under its own greatness, and crumbling and mouldring into ruin by too rapid and visible decay. We have lived to see its most ancient alliances dissolved and turned against us ; from one unfortunate example we are warranted to fear the defection of other valuable dependencies : we may yet live to see (for we have seen all that the most desponding could scarce have apprehended, in our time) revolutions still more dreadful ; the extinction of our credit, and the annihilation of our resources. One gleam of comfort still remains to us, distant as yet, I fear, in the union of all our jarring interests, and the co-operation of all the abilities confessedly great, and of the talents eminently conspicuous which we have yet to boast of. But if the astonishing powers of our rival leaders are only exerted, to strengthen the interests of party, or to secure the emoluments of place ; if all (for this unwillingness to support a falling empire is too general) if all are merely solicitous to shake off the load from their own necks, and fix it upon others

equally oppressed; daringly to defy, or clandestinely to evade, the most wholesome regulations; peace will be to us but the foundation of worse commotions: a fallacious and insecure cessation of hostilities, liable to be disturbed upon the shallowest pretences, and subject to the mercy of an interested, and wary enemy.

A pious and humane prelate among our late enemies, in his encomium upon the peace, which they at least, have no reason to condemn, has with great candour and liberality expressed his wishes, that the two rival nations of England and France, might preserve this amity inviolate, and hear of war no more. In these truly christian and patriotic sentiments, we concur most devoutly, and would gladly extend them to the whole race of mankind: but we confess ourselves not so sanguine as to look for their completion. While the interests of both kingdoms interfere so essentially, there will inevitably be jealousies of each others encroachments; and there never will be wanting ambitious or designing men to foment those

those

those jealousies, and to wait their opportunity of renewing the disturbances: for in times of confusion only can their talents be called forth, and from the general calamity they expect their harvest. Earnest therefore as it might be the desire of every good man, that wars might cease in all the world, and that “all nations may hold the faith in the unity of spirit, and the bond of peace;” the condition of this world is such, that wars must unavoidably prevail; and the words of our Saviour will eventually be fulfilled, in that sense in which he manifestly intended them, that he “came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword.”

A question has been asked, and with strict propriety, what advantages can a nation that subsists by agriculture, and flourishes by commerce, propose to itself from war? If war or peace depended solely on ourselves, we should be, of all men most infatuated, the most deserving of perdition, if we voluntarily forfeited our commercial advantages, or wantonly courted unnecessary troubles. But if declining hostilities
can

can scarcely secure us from the outrages of war; if the too anxious appearance of "labouring for peace" be only the way more effectually to provoke offence, a dreadful and deplorable necessity it is, that peace never can be ensured, but by preparations for war; and the stronger the sinews, as they are called, of war are, the more flattering is the prospect of peace, and more permanent its establishment. In our case these sinews have been strained but too high, and however harsh and unwelcome be the truth, our distresses are to be ascribed, as much at least, to the forced exertions and unexampled success of a former war, as to the unfortunate events of that just concluded. Our enemies see this with insolent exultation, and are ever prepared to take advantage of our fallen glories. The terms of this peace they dictated themselves, and to their cruel mercies is limited its continuance. Perchance at this instant in some distant quarter of the globe, hostilities may already have recommenced; perchance the sleeping embers of discontent are only buried under a treacherous covering for the present, to break out with augmented violence hereafter,

hereafter, and to kindle a flame which we may never see extinguished. Degraded however as our condition is, we have this consolation left, that all is not yet lost, that peace came in the critical instant to secure a remnant; and that if this interval, short as it may be allowed us, be managed with advantage, the gloominess of the prospect may yet brighten into cheerfulness; the sun of Britain may arise from its eclipse, and break out again with undiminished splendour.

I wish not to aggravate the distresses of my country, nor to lower us in our own estimation, or in the opinion of other nations: but to disguise our real situation from ourselves, and to deceive us with false colours, and false assurances, is equally criminal, and little less than treason. By ignorance and misrepresentation, we may be lulled into a fatal security, and not awake from our dream, till “our destruction cometh as a whirlwind;” but by being forewarned of our danger, we are not unprepared for our defence, nor disarmed by surprize from employing our resources.

resources. With true Roman fortitude therefore, let us not, tho' the enemy be even at the gates, *despair of the Republic*. Much may be yet done by the concurrence of the whole, by the counsels of the able, the liberality of the opulent, the œconomy of all. But if the rich will disable themselves by their profusion, as the poor are disqualified by their necessities, from contributing their support; the middle class, the most useful, the most willing, and the most burdened part of the community, will shrink from their oppressions, and seek for protection in other countries, where honest industry may be better encouraged, and patient merit more liberally rewarded. What may result from these secessions, if continued, it requires no great sagacity to foresee; it is sufficient to suggest, that the mischief is begun.

From these disheartning reflections let us divert our thoughts if possible; let us look back with satisfaction, tho' it will scarcely be without shuddering, upon the gulf we have avoided; and let us look forward with hope, in a pleasing anticipation of those blessings which may arise from peace. To
 God

God therefore the author and giver of every good gift, “who breaketh the bow, and knappeth the spear
 “in funder,” let us offer up our sacrifice. “O sing
 “unto the Lord with Thanksgiving, sing praises
 “upon the harp unto our God, who maketh the
 “grafs to grow for the cattle, and herb for the ser-
 “vice of man; who giveth peace in our borders, and
 “filleth us with the finest of the wheat.”——Thou
 also haft visited us, O Lord, with thy fatherly cor-
 rection, and madest us to drink of the dregs of thy dif-
 pleasure: we receive with submission these thy salu-
 tary warnings; we magnify thy name for the mercies
 which thou haft shewn in judgment. Teach us,
 O Lord, to improve under thy chastisements, to
 look humbly into ourselves, and to learn from our
 experience, to be more patient in disappointment, less
 insolent in success. Make us duly sensible of the
 many wonderful deliverances thou haft vouchsafed
 to this Church and Nation, the storms we have escap-
 ed, and the more perilous trials which thou haft
 given us strength to overcome. In a thankful compa-
 rison of the present with our past distresses, call our
 E recollection.

recollection to those times, when we were without
 Sovereign to the state, without Pastors to thy flock;
 when, blinded by a merciless mistaken zeal, the
 brother lifted up his arm against the brother, the
 father against his child: thou hast saved us, O Lord,
 from that scourge of thy wrath, intestine war: yet
 still we feel too sorely the wounds of our disunion.
 Give us grace to forget our enmities too recent to be im-
 placable, to forgive as Christians, to love as brethren.
 From fatal reflection on our past errors, teach us to
 preserve the few that are still faithful, and grant us
 that first of thy blessings, to be at unity in ourselves.
 If it be a vain hope that peace may be perpetual, grant,
 O Father of mercies, that it be undisturbed by the
 madness of our own people: if insulted by foes, de-
 serted by friends, and abandoned by the world, O be
 thou our protector, "O visit us with thy salvation."

F I N I S.