

An ESSAY  
Tending to Promote the  
**Kingdom**  
Of Our LORD  
**Jesus Christ.**

As it was Delivered in a SERMON  
Preached before His Excellency the  
GOVERNOUR, the Honourable  
COUNCIL, and Representatives  
of the Province of the *Massachusetts-*  
*Bay in N. England, On May 28. 1707.*  
Which was the Anniversary Day for  
Election of Her Majesties Council,  
for that Province.

By Samuel Belcher,  
Pastor of a Church in Newbury.

Matt. 6 33 *But Seek ye first the Kingdom of God,*  
*and his Righteousness : ---*

Boston in N. E. Printed by W. Green.

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*To His EXCELLENCY,*  
**JOSEPH DUDLEY Esq.**

*Captain General & GOVERNOUR in Chief,  
of the Provinces of the Massachusetts-Bay,  
and New-Hampshire in New-England.*

*May it please Your Excellency,*

**I** Have not the Vanity to think any thing of Mine worthy the Publick View ; But since it is Your EXCELLENCIES Pleasure, That this Discourse of the KINGDOM of CHRIST, be made Publick ; I humbly Pray, it may find Shelter under the Shadow of Your Excellencies Favour and Protection.

*I am Your EXCELLENCIES  
most Humble Servant,*

**Samuel Belcher.**

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# A SERMON

Preached on the

# Election Day

*May 28th. 1707.*

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Matthew VI. 10.

*Thy Kingdom Come.*

**I**T is very Obvious that the Words now read are the second Petition, in that which is commonly called, *The Lords Prayer*, delivered by our Lord, near the middle of that Divine Sermon He Preached in the Mount ; delivered as a most Excellent Formulary, Pattern, and Platform of Prayer, unto which, all our Prayers are to be conformed, as to *Matter* and *Manner*, as appears by the

Words of our Lord, in the Prologue to this Prayer, v. 9. *After this Manner therefore Pray ye, i. e.* consonant, and agreeable here-unto : Nor know I any inconvenience, if the very Words be used, as the case may require.

In this Prayer may be considered. (1.) The Preface, in which God is described,

1. In Relation to us, [ *Our Father,* ] an Encouraging Relation, inviting and Encouraging all his Children to make their Addresses to Him, with *Confidence* ; That he bears like affections, & incomparably greater, than any Earthly Parents can do to their Children : And with *Assurance*, that they shall be heard, in all Things they call upon Him for, which are according to his Will ; in the Name of His Son.

2. God is here farther described in Relation to his own Sovereign Majesty, [ *Which art in Heaven,* ] admonishing us to keep our Distance when we come before Him ; *not to be rash with our Mouth, or let our heart be hasty to utter any thing before God ; for God is in Heaven, and we are upon Earth.*

(2.) As to the *Matter*, and *Order* of these *Petitions*, we are directed, That the things which regard the Glory of God, have the *Preference* and *Precedence* to those of our own *Necessities*. Hence we first Pray, for the Sanctification of the Name of God, and the Establishing of the Kingdom of his Son, &c. before other things.

[ *Thy*

[ *Thy Kingdom come.* ]

By Kingdom I understand, not that *Natural* and *Essential* Kingdom, which the Son hath in common with his Father, as he is King of *Nations* : But that *Mediatorial*, and *Dispensator* Kingdom, which he hath received by *Donation*, and *Deputation* from his Father, as King of Saints. The Administration of which Kingdom is committed to the Son, till the consummation of all things ; When he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, as fully completed, and accomplished ; all the Elect gathered ; all Enemies subdued ; When God shall be all in all, and the Son shall Reign together with the Father. throughout the interminable Revolutions of Eternity, 1 Cor. 15. 24.

1. This Kingdom is *Spiritual* ; Not exercised over mens natural Lives, or Estates : Our Lord when upon the Earth, would not inter-meddle with dividing Inheritances, Luk. 12, 13, 14. His Kingdom is not of this World ; it is over the Hearts and Consciences of men ; Casting down strong holds, silencing carnal reasonings, bringing over the affections, & bringing the Thoughts to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. 10. 5. Awakening and Terrifying the Consciences of Hypocrites : but speaking Peace to the hearts of his People.

2. *Eternal* ; It is a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor left to other People : Dan. 2. 44.

*A Kingdom which cannot be moved, Heb. 12. 28. Other Kingdoms may be shaken to their foundations ; and their Kings be shaken out of their Thrones. But unto the Son, he saith, Thy Throne, O God is for ever and ever, Heb. 1. 8. But this must be understood as to the Substance of it, for, as to the present form and manner of Administration, as it is now dispensed by Officers, and Ordinances ; it is limited to the Time of the End, when the Son shall deliver it up to God, in like manner as he received it from God : But as to the Substance, He shall be Head of his Church for ever ; an everlasting Father, and of his Kingdom there shall be no End, Luk. 1. 33.*

*The coming of this Kingdom is,*

1. *Internal ; it is within us, Luk. 17. 21. Comes not with Observation, as earthly Monarchies doe, whose Original, Foundations, Constitutions, Growth, Declensions, Translations, lie open to the Observation, and Discourses of Learned Men. But this is the Rule of Gods Spirit in the hearts of his People, consisting in Righteousness, Peace, and Joy ; the Growth and Multiplication of these blessings, from the gracious Presence of Christ.*

2. *External ; In the powerful Administration of Gospel Ordinances ; gathering Multitudes of Subjects under the Government of Christ : a visible, and glorious appearance thereof, accompanied with abundance of Peace and Prosperity,*  
*accor-*

according to the Promises, Psal. 72. 7. *In his days shall the righteous flourish ; and abundance of Peace, so long as the Moon endureth.* Isa. 2. 2, 3, 4. *And it shall come to pass, in the last days, That the Mountain of the Lords house shall be Established in the Top of the Mountains, &c.* and many other Scriptures.

The Doctrinal Observation which I shall take up from these words, may be to this purpose :

*That it ought to be the great Concern of a Religious People of all Orders, faithfully to Endeavour in their several Capacities, the promoting of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In order to the Illustration of this Truth, let it be Enquired, *When it may be said, That the Kingdom of CHRIST makes Advances amongst a Religious People ?*

Take the answer under the following Heads.

I. *When the Name of God is duly Sanctified by them, and amongst them.* It is easie to observe, that in this Head, I have regard to the order of the Petitions ; *Hallowed be thy Name : Thy Kingdom Come.* When a Professing People do give unto God the Glory due to his Name, then may it be said, that the Kingdom of God is come unto them, Psal. 29, 1, 2. And this they may



## **A SERMON Preached**

may do by their Faith, Works, and Worship :  
When they are found in the faith of the Gospel.  
He that would build high, had need to see that  
the Foundation Stones be deeply & truly laid.  
Faith in God is a Foundation-stone ; *He that  
comes to God, must believe that He is.* Now when  
a People do believe in God, and do believe in  
Jesus, the Christ of God, the Lords Christ, the  
Kingdom of God is come amongst them ;  
when they acknowledge no God but He who is  
the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ;  
When they do embrace, profess and contend  
for the faith once delivered to the Saints ; and  
what they do believe in their heart, they are  
ready when orderly called to it, to make con-  
fession thereof with their mouth unto Salvation.  
Again, When their faith blossoms forth to Love,  
and Love fructifies unto good Works ; when  
Faith works by Love, and Love to God doth  
excite and constrain such a people to keep the  
Commandments of God.

2. *When a Professing People do Worship God accor-  
ding to his own Mind, as to the Matter, Means, and  
Manner of Worship.* When the Mind of Christ,  
and not mans Mistake, is made the Rule of  
Worship : *But in vain do they worship me, teaching  
for doctrines the commandments of men,* Mat. 15. 9.  
When God is worshipped as it is *Written*, name-  
ly with Scripture Worship ; When the Statutes  
of Christ, not of Omri are kept. When Gods  
Altar



Altar is set upon its right Basis, and they who Minister at the Altar, do see that all things be done according to the Pattern. When a People do Worship God after the due Order, not in an External, August and Pompous Way of Worship only, but in Spirit and in Truth, with reverence and godly fear, agreeable to the simplicity of the Primitive and Purest Times.

3. *When Gods Sabbaths are Religiously Observed.* Many have truly Remarked, That Religion flourishes or decays, lives or dies, as Gods Sabbaths are Sanctify'd or Prophan'd; let this vein be cut, and the vitals of Religion will soon drop forth. If the Lords-Day be thrown up, and laid in common with the other days of the Week, Good men may justly fear, it will not be long, before God will remove his Kingdom from such an unthankful people. But if a People shall turn away their foot from polluting Gods Sabbath, from doing their pleasure on his Holy Day, and shall call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, &c. They may expect much of the Presence of Christ amongst them, Isa. 58. 12.

4. *Another promising symptom of the Prosperous State of the Kingdom of Christ, is, When Conversions are frequent, and multitudes are born to Christ, numerous as the drops of dew from the womb of the morning, Psal. 110. 3. When the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent*  
take

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**take it by force:** When the doors of Gods House stand open continually, and many enter in: When the Church hath frequent occasion to say, *Who hath begotten me these?* Isa. 49. 21. Who are these that flee as a Cloud, as doves to their windows. When the Blessing of God, rests upon a Religious People, *Behold! a Troop comes;* when one shall say, *I am the Lords,* and another shall call himself by the name of *Jacob,* and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and *Sir-* ~~name~~ *name himself by the name of Israel.*

5. *When Converted Ones do grow and thrive, and make increase with the increase of God,* 2 Pet. 3. 18. When Professors bring forth much fruit, and abound in the work of the Lord; when they walk worthy of God, who hath called them to his Kingdom and Glory; when they bring forth Fruit unto, and in old age, and the longer they live, the more grace they have, the more holy, humble, heavenly-minded; and as natural bodies move swifter near their Centre: so gracious Souls, the nearer Heaven, the more haste they make thither.

6. *When a People are acted with a holy zeal for God, and against Sin; zealous for the Doctrine, Discipline, Order, and Government of Christ:* Acting from the same Spirit, as of old, *Phineas* and *Elijah*, who cannot bear them which are evil, who having Tried them who say they are Apostles and are not, have found them Liars: Whose

Whose Zeal is kindled with a Coal from Gods Altar, and governed by knowledge, to the ends of Gods Glory, the promoting Truth, Righteousness and Peace, acceptable to God, and approved of men.

7. *When Families are Seminaries of Piety and Vertue.* As Religion began, so is it maintain'd and preserv'd in Families. Now when Heads of Families do exercise their Authority, in Commanding their Children and Household after them, *That they may keep the way of the Lord:* Religion will be kept alive. Well-govern'd Families resemble little Churches, and afford matter for greater. When our Sons and our Daughters are prun'd and polisht in their youth, by good government in the Family; they may be suitably prepared, the one to be planted in Christ's Garden, the other to be laid in the Building of his House.

8. *When Civil Rulers are keepers of both the Tables:* Do rule with God, and for God, and remembering their Character [ *I have said ye are gods* ] do Exert their Divine Vertues and Accomplishments; to the Weal of their People, cherishing those that are good, and like the most High, being kind to the Unthankful; & a people thus favour'd and bless'd do strengthen the hands and hearts of their Rulers, and do cheerfully render them the double, treble honour of Countenance, Maintenance and Obedience.

9. *When*

9. *When Gospel Churches are Candlesticks of Gold, not only gilt.* When the Lights in the Candlesticks, are burning and shining Lights, and they who bear the Vessels of the Lord are all holy; when the Angels of the Churches do sustain that Character, not in Name and Title only, but in regard of holiness, agility and indefatigableness in the Service of their Lord. When the Churches Stars are not falling Stars, nor wandring Stars, but fixed, casting forth their borrowed Light, to the loosning the bands of Tempestuous Orion, delivering Sin-bound Souls from the cords of their iniquities, and reviving drooping Spirits, with sweet Influences, as the Pleiades. When the work of Christ prospers in their hands, and the Kingdom of Christ rises up to Elated degrees under their Administrations; moving the glad Spectators to cry, *Grace ! Grace ! to it.*

10. *When the practice of Second-Table Duties, Enters into the Character of a Professing People, and becomes a considerable part of it.* We know that general Rule, Phil. 4. 8. *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things; bring them down into practice.* Without these, the loudest Profession is but as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. It is a reproach to Religion when the Professors of it,  
 soar

soar aloft in their discourses, but by and by descend again, & sordidly creep after their lusts ; But they who shall abide in Gods Tabernacle, are men of other principles ; they are Children that will not lie ; a just weight, and a just Ephah is their delight : but false ballances, & the scant measure, that is abominable, is an abomination to them, as to the Lord ; they do in holy wise disdain to enrich themselves by little Arts ; we read their character, *Psal. 15.*

11. *When a Professing People do faithfully endeavour to preserve the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Do stand fast in one Spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. When they do not denominate themselves from this or the other party, but from Christ, & can be content that others should be Christ's as well as they ; we know the Apostles Exhortation, *Follow peace and holiness, &c.* There is not like to be much holiness, where there is but little peace ; Peace is the Tranquillity of Order ; if Peace be broken, Order will be crippled, and we may invert the words of the Apostle to his *Colossians*, grieving and beholding your want of Order ; when contentions grow warm, love will grow cool. *Jerusalem is builded as a City that is compact together.*

12. And Lastly. ; *When a people are contented under their present circumstances ; and can quietly leave the Government of the World to him,*  
whose

whose Kingdom ruleth over all ; (as *Luther* once to *Melancthon* ) and without murmuring ; yea with thankfulness receive what Divine Providence carves out to them, and are not forward to meddle with those who are given to Change.

These are some of the happy Symptoms which do betoken, the flourishing State of the Kingdom of Christ.

This Truth may be farther argued,

1. *From that Gospel Precept, Matt. 6. 33. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God.* Our Lord Jesus Christ is KING of his Church : *Isa. 33. 22. The Lord is our King : He was born a King, Matt. 2. 2. Where is he that is born King of the Jews.* He was a King before he was born, by the appointment and decree of God : *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion ; I will declare the decree, Psal. 2. 6, 7.* But he shall not be a King without a Kingdom ; whatever some have vainly, and curiously enough thought possible : His Father hath given him large Territories ; *the Uttermost parts of the Earth for his Possession.* And this in virtue of that blessed compact which passed between the Father and the Son, when the Terms of Mans Redemption, were agreed upon, in the Council of God : That the Son of God making his Soul an offering for Sin, he shall not die in vain ; He shall see a numerous Seed, *Sprinkle many Nations.* God will divide him a Portion with the Great, *Isa. 52. 13, 15. 53. 10, 11.*

2. *But what advantage will it be to any particular man, that Christ hath a Kingdom in the World, if he have no share in it?* If there be nothing of it in his heart, he may behold something of it with his Eyes, but never Taste of the power, or plenty of it; so that we may argue from the necessity which lies upon men to concern themselves in this matter in order to their best good, it is the One needful.

3. *It is the best thing:* The Apostle tells us, *It is good to be zealously affected alwayes in a good thing.* Now the Kingdom of Christ is the best thing in the World: Christ is the best King, higher then the Kings of the Earth; *Fairer than the Children of men, anointed with the oyl of gladness above his fellows:* His Subjects are the best Subjects, and most honourable; He makes them all Kings: His Laws the best Laws; His Law a Royal Law, a perfect Law of Liberty: The privileges of his Kingdom the best privileges; and the best thing that we can do, is to lay hold of this Kingdom, to prosecute the interest of it, with vigorous affections, both in our selves and others.

I might Reason farther, from the common places of Honour, Interest and Conscience. But I shall proceed to the APPLICATION.

U S E I. *We may hence learn, what cause we have to bless God, that there is such a gracious Appearance of the Kingdom of Christ, yet amongst us in this*  
B
Land.

*Land.* Our Fathers when they transported themselves and Families over the great Ocean into this Wilderness, they designed the Interest of the Kingdom of Christ in that Undertaking. They left not their Native Country, a Land which was dear to them, out of any disaffection to Monarchy, or dislike of the Civil Government. They came not hither, for the sake of Dominion, the great Idol of the World; they came not to Erect an Independent State here: They came not to Inrich themselves by Trade, or to Inlarge their Borders, that they might live in a large place. They propounded to themselves higher and more noble Ends; their Design it was to Exalt our Lord Jesus Christ in his Kingly Office, to lay the Foundations of his Kingdom in the Remote Parts of the Earth, where Satan had so long usurp'd quiet Possession; that this part of the Earth might be leaven'd with the favour of the Gospel, as well as her other Sisters; that they and their Children might serve God in the Wilderness. God owned them, maintain'd their Cause, they had much of the Presence of Christ, who shewed them much of the Goings out, & Comings in of his House, the Laws, and Ordinances thereof; they were edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied, their Fame went forth, they were Renowned for Religion: *And having Ser-*  
*v'd*



and their Generation, according to the Will of God, they are fallen asleep. Now we their Posterity of one and another Generation are Risen up in their places, and although as to too many of them, it may be said, they are not like unto their Fathers, and it may be, that the best do but imitate them, as Children follow their Parents; *Non æquis Passibus*, at too great a distance; and notwithstanding there are some Surviving, who saw the former Glory, and who may find cause to say, *That the Glory of this Generation is not like the Glory of the first*; yet let us pray that God will make it so, and let us bless God, for what of Glory yet dwells in our Land.

I hope it may without offence be said, That *New-England* may yet at least Vie, with any of the **QUEENS** foreign Plantations, for pure Religion, and the power of Godliness. Our **GOVERNOUR** and **COUNSELLORS** this day, let it be spoken with due thanks to **GOD**, and our gracious **QUEEN**, are all chosen from amongst our selves, though not all by our selves; Men of *Jeshro's* character, and who desire to Fear God and Eschew evil. Our **GOVERNOUR** a Person born, and brought up amongst us, who naturally cares for the Weal of his Native Country; Excellently qualified, for Understanding the Times, and who knows, whether sent, and continued amongst us, for such a Time as this? Through whose happy Conduct,

we who live on the Frontiers, and in the Exposed Plantations, do enjoy a measure of quietness, beyond our fears, and above our hopes, which we do accept always, and in all places, with all humble Thankfulness. Our MINISTRY, a Godly, Learned, Painful, Condescending Ministry. And as to the Body of our People, They are to be accounted Orthodox Christians, and sound in the Faith.

There is a great deal of Religion in this great Town ; as there is a great deal of Vanity, so there is a great deal of the *Power of Godliness* : The Town fares the better for it. The like may be said of some other great Towns in this Province ; and lesser Towns too, in which God is Solemnly Worshipped every Sabbath day. There is in this Country, many a poor Cottage, whose Out-side resembles the Tents of Kedar, whose Riches and Ornaments are within, Gospel Worshippers ; who constantly Serve God Day and Night, *These are our Walls and bulwarks ; The chariots of our Israel, and the Horsemen thereof* : and shall we not bless God for this Glory ?

I proceed to another USE, and let it be a Word of EXHORTATION : To stir up all of Us, in our several Stations, and Capacities to promote the Interest of CHRIST's Kingdom in Our Selves and Others.

And perhaps it may not be indecent for me to say,

say, That all Orders here present, are to look upon it as the Work of their Generation. And if I should think to attempt any thing more particularly, His Excellency, and this Assembly have been Address'd so often, and to so good purpose, from this Place, and on this Occasion, that there will be the less reason for me to say,

That your EXCELLENCY, having prepar'd and Setled a Throne for the Lord Jesus in your own Heart, and having resign'd up your Self to the Conduct of his Spirit, and taken up with that part of his Kingdom, *which comes not by Observation, but is Righteousness, Peace, and Joy, in the Holy Ghost* : You are on this account, as many other, the rather Obliged, & Enabled, to Observe, & Procure, The coming of the Kingdom of our Lord JESUS CHRIST in this Land, in greater Power, & Glory ; in so doing, you do approve your Self an Eminent, and Illustrious part of His Kingdom, and will bring upon you, The blessings of Heaven above, the blessings of the Deep that lyeth under ; the blessings of the Earth, and fulness thereof ; *That the blessings of your EXCELLENCY, may prevail above the blessings of your Progenitors, from the good will of Him who dwelt in the Bush.*

And those HONOURABLE Persons who are, or may be called to Assist in Government, They will readily concur to any thing, to every thing, which

which may conduce to the building up the Kingdom of Christ amongst us.

You have before you, the Examples of Holy, and Honourable Persons, whose Names are preserved in Sacred Writt, who were famous in their Generations, on the account of Christs Kingdom. *Moses* was King in *Jeſurun*, he was faithful in all his House as a Servant, to a Tack, and to a Pin. *David* was Uneasy whilst the Ark abode in the Fields of the Wood, was restless in his thoughts till he had prepared a Resting place for it. I might instance in *Nebemiab*, *Mordecai*, who sought the Wealth of their People, who were the Lords People, and His Kingdom.

And now as to those VENERABLE Persons of the Sacred Order : You know your Character so well, & the care of Churches lies so near your Hearts, that you will all agree to that Wise Master builder ; *We Preach not Our Selves, but Christ J. ſus the Lord, and Our Selves the Churches Servants, for JESUS ſake.*

There is another Order here present, Namely, Those good GENTLEMEN who Represent the Body of this People : It is Evident by that great Trust this People have reposed in you, That they do Presume and Expect, That in the choice now before you, you will have a special regard to Such, who in the Judgment of Charity, have Subjected themselves to the Rule of Christs Kingdom.

And

And there is not the meanest Person in this Assembly, but who may, by his devout Prayers, and pious Life, give a lift to this cause.

Let it be considered, That CHRIST's Kingdom shall come in great Power and Glory. *The Kingdoms of this World, shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, Rev. 11. 15.* God will bring home his ancient People : *The Lord said, I will bring again from Babylon, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea, Psal. 68.22.* He is able to do it : and the gifts and calling of God are without Repentance. All Impediments must be removed ; *Euphrates* must be dried up, let the Streams swell never so high : The Ottoman Monarchy, if not otherwise disposed of, will sink under the weight of its own bulk. Every Limb, and Toe of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Image, shall be broken in pieces, by the Stone cut out of the Mountain without hands : The Idolatrous Worship of the *Gentiles*, shall be abolished : Our Lord Jesus Christ, will in these last days, shake all Kingdoms, and Nations, till He have shaken out all that Antichristian Mortar, with which they were cemented in their first constitution, and until He hath formed them to the Interest of His Kingdom. And Tottering *Rome* shall at length fall, and great will be the fall thereof ; not a Stone left upon a Stone : The man of Sin must be Totally destroy'd, Head and Members, Root and Branches.

The Expectations of Gods People are raised up to look after, and wait for the Accomplishment of these things ; Multitudes of Prayers are hastning of them. It is a happy Omen, *That the Time to favour Sion, yea the set Time is come ; When the Lords Remembrancers give him no Rest, till he make Jerusalem a Praise in the Earth ; when his Servants take pleasure in the Stones of Sion, and favour the Dust thereof.* Then let us prepare to meet the Lord ; let us sit loose from all these things which shall be dissolved ; let us see that we be furnished with *Vessel Oyl*, that our Lamps be Trim'd, and burning, that we be not ashamed before Him, at his coming. Let us keep our selves upon our Watch-towers, and let us gird up the Loins of our Mind, be Sober, and hope to the End, for the Grace that is to be brought, at the Revelation of Jesus Christ : *Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry ;* and perhaps before many Slumbring, Sleepy Virgins are aware : Let us then Look for Him.

And let this Great Assembly Unanimously joyn in that Holy Comprecation ; *A M E N, Even so, Come, Lord Jesus.*

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T H E E N D.

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*Concio ad Magistratum,*  
O R,  
An Affize SERMON

Preached

Before the HONOURABLE Her  
Majesties Superiour COURT of  
Judicature, Court of Affize, and  
General Goal Delivery, at *Ipswich* in  
*New-England*, the 21<sup>st</sup>. of *May*, 1702.

From those Words,

*Ecclesiastes* VIII. 11.

*Because Sentence against an Evil work is  
not executed speedily: therefore the heart  
of the Sons of men is fully set in them  
to do Evil.*

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By Samuel Belcher,  
Pastor of a Church at Newbury.

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T O  
**PAUL DUDLEY Esqr.**

*Her Majesties Attorney General in  
New-England.*

*S I R,*

**T**HE following SERMON has now  
Lien in Silence for several years,  
and might I have had my own  
choice, it should have Remain'd so  
always : But your great Importunity has  
prevail'd on me to Publish it, ( such as it is ; )  
and the Office and Station you now bear in  
your own Country, which Obliges and En-  
gages you more immediately to Prosecute  
Offenders, and to see that Sentence be  
Speedily Executed against them, will suffi-  
ciently Justifie the Dedication to your Self.  
Now that the GOD of Blessing would Bless  
and make you a Blessing in and to your  
Generation, as those of your truly Honou-  
rable and Worthy Family, have been, and  
are, ( and GOD Grant may long continue, )  
and your Self much more abundantly, is, and  
shall be the Sincere Desire and Prayer of,

*S I R,*

*Your Affectionate Humble Servant,*

**SAMUEL BELCHER.**



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# An Affize SERMON,

Preached at *Ipswich*, May, 21<sup>st</sup>. 1702.

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Ecclesiastes VIII. 11.

*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily : therefore the heart of the Sons of men is fully set in them to do Evil.*

**W**ISDOM is commended in this Chapter, for its Usefulness to Men, in several Cases.

I. In that it doth direct them how to deport themselves, towards *Kings* and *Rulers* ; so as to keep them in their Obedience, grounded on the Oath of God, which they have solemnly taken, Namely, *The Oath of Allegiance*, which Subjects Swear to their Prince ; I counsel thee to keep the Kings Commandment, and that in regard of the Oath of God, v. 2. And that they may avoid those dangers, and precipices which foolish men, through their folly and indiscretion do cast themselves into : *Be not hasty to go out of his sight : stand not in an Evil thing : for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth*

pleaseth him. *Whofo keepeth the Commandment shall feel no evil thing, : v. 3, 5.*

2. Wisdom furnishes men with Expedients in their Preparations, for the prevention of those Unhappy Accidents and evil Occurrents, which do frequently happen in this changeable World, and are many, unforeseen, intricate, and not otherwise to be avoided : *v. 6, 7, 8.*

3. It teaches how to make a right Judgment of the Prosperity, and Impunity of wicked men ; That notwithstanding their present Immunity from punishment, & prosperous Successes ; they shall not always escape : but are in due Time Snared & Taken in the Work of their own hands.

[ *Because Sentence against an Evil Work is not speedily Executed.* ] Sentence against every Evil Work is passed in *Foro Cæli*, in the Court of Heaven ; it is the Execution that is suspended.

GOD has determined in his Eternal Counsel to punish Sin ; and the act is no sooner committed, but the Sinner becomes obnoxious ; Guilt commences against him, and the Man is Self-condemn'd ; Condemned in the Court of Conscience ; if Conscience be awake to do its Office, and tho' the Punishment be defer'd, Conscience keeps him in safe Custody.

[ *Therefore the Heart of the Sons of men,* ] That is, ( says a Learned Man ) *Illorum qui sunt nutriti in carnalitate, et sunt filij hominum, non Dei :* Of them who are nourish'd in Sensuality ; and are the Sons of Men, not of God. C ; [ 4

*[ Is fully set in them to do Evil , ] i. e. Composed, harden'd and determined, to turn all to an Increase of Wickedness.*

In these Words are touched,

1. *Gods Patience towards Evil doers.*
2. *Their perverse use of Gods Patience to a Licentiousness in Sin.*

**Obser. I.** *That the Righteous God for Holy Ends is sometimes pleased to suffer Evil doers, for a time to go Unpunished.*

**Obser. II.** *Such is the Perverseness of Evil doers, that they abuse the Patience of God, to a Liberty, and boldness in Sin.*

**GOD** is pleased oftentimes to Exercise long patience towards Sinners ; they have a Day of Grace, and they have a day of Patience : The day of Grace may be ended and past, and yet Patience may interpose, and obtain a reprieve for the Sinner a little longer : Justice hath Entail'd punishment to Sin, and though it be Impossible to cut off the Entail ; whilst Evil men persist in their Wickedness, yet Patience oft-times suspends the punishment.

The Long-suffering of God waited on the Old World, all the time the Ark was preparing, Namely; One hundred and twenty years, 1 Pet. 3. 20. Gen. 6. 3. which must not be understood of the Term of Mans Life cut off in so little time,  
to

to so short a scantling ; but of Gods Patience towards the Old World, which he would extend no farther. God had determin'd to bring Evil upon *Abub* and his house ; yet the evil determined was defer'd all his days upon his Humiliation, 1 King. 21. 29. *Because he humbled himself before me ; I will not bring the Evil in his days, but in his Sons days will I bring the evil upon his House.* The doomed *Amorites* were respited from destruction, four Generations through the Patience of God. Forty years Patience pass'd between *Jerusalem* threatned, and *Jerusalem* destroy'd : All the cumbrers of the ground are not presently cut down, *Luk. 7. 8.* Some Reasons why all Sinners are not presently punished.

Reas. 1. God forbears to punish speedily, that men may have a space to Reform, and grow better. I gave her space to repent, *Rev. 2. 21.* *Differt penam dum Expectat penitentiam :* So *Hierom :* He deferreth the punishment, while he Expecteth Repentance. Punishment is not the primary intention of the Supream Law-giver : The Law of God ( as other Laws ) binds to Obedience ; Punishment is superadded in a Secondary way, to reduce men to their Duty : Hence God warns, and waits before He strikes. We read of the Riches of Gods forbearance, *Rom 2. 4.* It is the forbearance of God which makes Him rich in Souls ; the Salvation of Thousands of Souls is owing to the forbearance and long-suffering of God. It is the Patience of

the good Shepherd that seeks, finds, and brings home the wandring Sheep ; when impatience would easily neglect, and despise a single Sheep. The patient Father Receives, Cloaths, Feasts the Prodigal Son, and makes Apology for him too, to his discontented Brother. Had *Manasseh* been cut off in the full career of his Sin, we should not have heard of his Repentance, Restauration, and Reformation.

2. God sometimes spares wicked men, that they may be Improved as Instruments to punish others. He lets loose the Nations, and suffers them to break in upon one another, that they may afflict, vex and punish one another. God made a Rod of the *Assyrian* to scourge the Hypocrisy of his own People, Isa. 10. 5. O *Assyrian* the rod of mine anger. The great Invader of the Peace & quiet of Europe, as justly deserves to be called, *Flagellum Dei*, as ever *Totilas* did, as if raised up on purpose to disquiet the Nations. When God has done his Work by such Instruments, He will do his Work upon them ; He will punish them: When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Sion, &c. I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria, v. 12. Thus *Cæsar*, after all his Slaughters and blood-shed, it came at last to his own turn, he was ignominiously slain in the Senate-house, by some of his pretended friends.

3. Wicked

3. *Wicked men may in some sense be Spared, yet not Exempted from Punishment.* Wickedness carries its punishment along with it : Guilt lashes the Conscience with invisible Strokes ; a guilty Conscience is its own Tormentor ; no fury like it. Hence Wicked men are likened to the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, *Isa. 57. 20.* When Paul a Prisoner reasoned of Judgment to come, Felix, though a Judge, trembled ; the Lion within was awakened, and began to roar. After Nero had Murdered his Mother, he was ever haunted and tormented with her Ghost : Sin not repented of lies gnawing, and feeding as a Vulture on the Entrails. Now we see the Out-ward Splendor and Grandeur of Wicked men, but we see not the inward inquietude, and anxiety of their Minds ; we see the Silk Stocking, but not the Ulcerated Legg under it.

4. *The time wicked men are Spared, is not so long as we think for.* We reckon time by short and scanty measures, and a little time seems long to us : Gods forbearance of Sinners, though for many years, is nothing compared with his duration ; *A thousand years are but as one day, 2 Pet. 3. 8.* Now what is mans Life ? It is even a Vapor that appeareth for a little time, *Jam. 4. 14.* David says, Behold thou hast made my days, as an *hannu-breadth* ; and mine age is as nothing before thee, *Psal. 39. 5.* So then, there is no wrong done in whatever

part

part of mans short Life, his Sin unrepented of, finds him out. The Malefactor is not acquitted because the Execution is defer'd unto the Evening.

5. *The proper Time for the Punishment of Wicked men, is not yet come.* That is another reason why they are forborn : *To every thing there is a season.* They are not yet ripe for destruction, they have not yet filled up the measure of their Sin : The iniquity of the *Amorites* was not full in *Abrahams* time, *Gen. 15. 16.* Some fill up their measure sooner than others, and so bring upon themselves swift destruction. They who live under plenty of means, under the light, and influences of Gospel Ordinances, their Sins are sooner ripe for Punishment. Others have not the like advantages; and they are the longer borne with : *The times of Ignorance God winked at, Act. 17. 30.* Or wicked men may be spared for a time, that their Punishment may be the more remarkable ; they shall be made Examples : God sees their day is coming in which his Justice will ride triumphant, in their destruction. *Now is the End come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, Ezek. 7. 3.*

Lastly ; *Why may it not be to give a check to the Eagerneſs, and Haſtineſs of men to purſue and ſatisfy their own Revenges, under the plausible pretence, of Juſtice, and to teach us Clemency and forbearance ?*  
The

The Patience and Long-suffering of God, may be of great use to our Imitation, that we be not too forward to prosecute Injuries and Offences.

### I come to the APPLICATION.

**U S E. I.** What has been said may be Improved to Vindicate the Justice of Providence, in the Government of the World, from the Imputations of men, who either cannot see far off, or do pass a judgment too soon, before Providence hath done its work. It hath very much Exercised the thoughts of Inquisitive men among the Heathen, when they observed Wickedness Prosperous, but Virtue Oppressed ; and hath caused them to speak very doubtfully, if not altogether deny, the Being of Divine Providence. *Pompey* fights for Glory and is Victorious ; but when he turns his Arms to preserve his Countrys Liberty, he falls a Victim before the Ambition of his Corrivall. And it is not so much to be admired, because they wanted Divine Revelation. But others there have been, who have been furnished with more Excellent Instructions, than Nature can teach, who yet for a time could not satisfy themselves on this head. *I was Envious at the foolish* ( said that good man ) *when I saw the Prosperity of the Wicked,* Psal. 73. 3. Holy *Jeremiah* craves leave to debate this matter, *Let me talk with thee of thy Judgments,* Jer. 12. 1. The



Book of *Eſther* is an Excellent Scheme of Providence working to the Deliverance of the Church from that Destruction She was devoted to, by her Enemies. A Chain, whose links conſiſted of various matter, ſome of Gold, others of baſer Mettal, as One well obſerves. Now he that ſhall break this Chain, and conſider only ſome parts by themſelves, ſhall never be able to connect and reconcile them to the Grand deſign of Providence. While the Houſe is in building (perhaps it is the ſame Learned mans ſimilitude) the Materials lie here and there in heaps, in a diſorderly and uncomely manner, but when the Houſe is finiſh'd, a beautiful fabrick preſents it ſelf to our Eye: we often judge before the time, and ſo make falſe Judgments. But indeed a finite Underſtanding is not a competent Judge of thoſe things that are diſpoſed by Infinite Wiſdom. The Wheels of Providence are too intricate, high and dreadful, for our weak ſight to trace, and meaſure their motions, *Ezek. 1. 16, 18.*

U S E. II. The impunity of Evil doers in this Life, may confirm our Faith in the Doctrine of the laſt and general Judgment; *They do not Escape, but are reſerved unto the Judgment of the Great Day.* God has made a Righteous Law, by which He has declared His Sovereign Pleaſure, to puniſh the Tranſgreſſors with Death, *Rom. 6. 23.* But He ſometimes ſuſpends the Execution to another

another day : *Manet alta mente repositum.* God is in honour oblig'd to Punish Sin which is so directly contrary to his Being, and Life ; but it is with His Wisdom to direct, and determine the time when, and if not in this World, we may assuredly conclude, it shall be in another, *Ecc. 3. 16, 17. and Chap. 11. v. 9.* Nor want we Instances in Courts of humane Judicature, where sometimes the Tryal of Criminals is waved in an Inferiour ; and left to the Wisdom, and Authority of a Superiour Court. If there be not a future Judgment, many absurdities would follow, which mans Reason recoyls from ; then the best of men would be in a worse condition, than the basest of men. *If in this Life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable, 1 Cor. 15. 19.*

U S E. III. To detect and correct the Wretched perversness of mans Nature, in abusing the Patience of God ; as if Sinners were Spared to commit greater Abominations : *Jer. 7. 10. Let favour be shewed to the Wicked, yet will he not learn Righteousness ; therefore the heart of the Sons of men is fully set to do Evil : Their hearts are full to do Evil, so some read, Full of Evil Thoughts, Evil Desires, Purposes, Resolutions ; so full, that there is no room for the fear of Gods Judgments, no room for the Consideration of the foolishness of Wickedness, or their own danger.*

not restrain them, but they rush on without counsel, against counsel, as the Horse into the barrel; or rather the Wild Ass loose in the Wilderness; that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure, and happy will it be for such, if there be a Month in which they may be found, and caught, though it be among the thorns, as *Manassah* was: they think not of the Jugment to come, or if they do, they have set the day so far off, and removed it at such a distance from them; that as the Stars, it does but twinkle in their thoughts, and makes no powerful Impressions upon their Heart, or Life.

#### U S E. IV. OF EXHORTATION.

To stir up men wisely to Improve the dayes of Gods Patience, and to account his Long-suffering Salvation; to prepare to meet the Lord by sound Humiliation, and a timely Reformation of their Evil Life. The Sentence is past; it is meet Sinners should be Alarm'd, but if they will adventure to go on still in their Trespases, the Execution will follow, there will be none to interpose: *And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down, Luk. 13. 9.*

And here let it be considered, that sometimes the Sentence is speedily Executed, Justice is a Swift Witness against Evil doers: *Mal. 3. 5. They*

are soon cut down like the grass, Psal. 37. *It was Davids Observation long since, I have seen the Wicked in great Power, and Spreading himself like a green-bay tree; yet he passed away, and he was not, yea I sought him, but he could not be found.*

Nadab and Abihu, are Instances of present Punishment, Lev. 1. 2. in whom God was pleased to shew not only Judgment, but *Present Judgment: Salvian.* But if the Punishment be defer'd, it will be the heavier when it falls: *Jerusalem came down wonderfully, because she Remembered not her last End.*

## U S E. V.

The last U S E may be to Exhort and Excite us to Imitate the Goodness, Gentleness and Forbearance of GOD, towards one another, forbearing one another, Col. 3. 13. It is no little argument of the degeneracy of humane Nature; Mans eagerness and hastiness in Prosecution of Injuries. We call that *Justice*, which might too often more truly be named *Revenge*.

*Theodosius* was too hasty, in the Execution of the men of *Thessalonica*. Hasty Executions are oftner repented than recalled. It is known who that Prince was that could not call from his

that great Minister of State, when he  
 needed of him, he had too hastily sent  
 him.

Pure Religion and Undeiled is this, To I-  
 mitate the Divine Perfections : *Be ye*  
*therefore Merciful, as your Father also*  
*is Merciful.* He that makes GOD  
 his President, though he is  
 not like to hit the Mark,  
 yet surely it will be  
 to his honour that  
 he aimed at it,  
 and presses  
 towards  
 it.

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F I R I S.

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