Of abounding in good works.
I Cor. XV, 58. — "Always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

This exhortation is found at the close of a chapter, and for sublimity of religious effect has scarcely a superior in the whole Bible. It is that chapter in aught St. Paul's, with an expression that is full of inspiration, speaks of the firm hope of a resurrection from the dead, as he proceeds he grows warm with his subject; till as if rising in the strength of hope above every fear and every pain, he exclaims, "O death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?"
The story of death is one, & the strength of man is the law... But thank be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord. It was thus the exercise of the apostle could look into the grave with triumph; it was thus he could forget all he had endured, all he had suffered, when he saw in the distance "Those bright & shining hopes, oh how bright & shining, had been the object of his mind. It was for this he had toiled & striven, to disclose to him the glorious rewards of his toil." After having thus avenged his Lord, he proceeds to assert, "inherently, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, firmly believe that ye do labour in the Lord..."

In these words are presented to us a duty, & we know, each of these we should consider:

1. The duty incumbrances to abound in the work of the Lord. This expression in its application may signify something different; but the first flew to whom it was addressed, from what it implies with regard to ourselves, through the general duty of all ways abounding in the work of the Lord is as duty, given us, as it was given them. In this respect, probably the apostle had a reference to the duties of its members. For the faith among the malicious & powerful enemies. They were to be the active, faithful, & zealous champions of their religion; to use every effort to open new passages for the light of the world, from heaven to earth itself. They were to use an expression of Scripture: "use for the defence of the brethren, & they were to stand firm in danger of war, to arm this defence might expose them. Without any advantage of all these duties, when we the discharge of all those duties,
with the will of God imposed upon us, whether that
will be made known by reason or by revelation. For
whatever is right & reasonable in itself, whatever
serves the best and highest interests of ourselves &
others, must we always be the will of God, so that
we may properly be called His work. But this
work, because He requires it, & because it tends
directly to the advancement of His honor & glory
by advancing the virtue & happiness of men. Such
are the duties in general, wherein men are to abound
in the offices of piety towards God, of loving Him,
adorning in Him, worshipping Him, serving Him, &
submitting to His will; in works of equity & mercy
towards men, as dealing justly & mercifully with them, relieving their necessities, forgiving their
injuries, & contributing to their improvement;
in works of gravity & moderation to ourselves, in
subduing our passions, restraining our affections, controlling our desires; & in short, striving to make our lives in
such a manner, as becomes the dignity of rational
beings, & the responsible character of servants of the
Most High. These works are all good in them-
selves, & therefore indispensably necessary in the
plan of life. All virtues, it is true, are not of equal
importance. Scripture, we find, has a greater stress
in some, than in others. Thus, for instance, works
of mercy & charity are inculcated with more fre-
quency & earnestness, a remarkable-preeminence in
works of earnestness, a remarkable-preeminence in
the exhortations to the practice of them are given
to them. & the exhortations to the practice of
them are given, with peculiar force. They are
sometimes emphatically styled good works; & by the
constant exercise of them men are said to be rich
in good works. God has declared that Heareth
for mercy & not for sacrifice. & it is for the former
preference to the latter, when they stand in compa-
tition. And the mention the names of Jesus, & kings,
& emperors, when He gives a representation
of the day of judgment, says his tongue, as it
were, upon motives of mercy & charity, gomakes the processings of that great day turn upon an enquiry into them. Not that he would exclude a regard for other duties, but he would make them the jubilant voice & dignity of those... Still they are all incumbent upon us. They are all necessary to him, who would work the work of the Lord; we should endeavor not only to discharge them, but to abound in them.

But when we are directed to abound in the work of the Lord, we are not to understand it in such a sense, as to imagine that there is, or can be any such thing, as superfluity or supererogation. It is impossible for men to exceed their duty, or go beyond their obligations. He who has done the most, has not done more than enough. If he who has been most industrious in the cause of virtue, has no virtue to spare; we are obliged to exert ourselves to the utmost in the service of God, & the improvement of those talents & opportunities. As he has committed to our trust, & consequently the care of these ways of grace, of supererogation, for greater sins to having done more, than we are required to do. The notion of the supererogation, attending in the work of the Lord, is, that we should ever be careful & diligent, earnest & zealous in the discharge of our duty, that we should strive & contend with all our might to glorify God, to imitate his perfections, incessantly conversing in the furtherance & advancement of those great ends, & He has ever in view; to advance the improvement of our minds & hearts, the maintenance of truth, righteousness, holiness, benevolence, & charity; that we should labor to possess ourselves of these virtues & graces, which are not only the greatest ornaments of our minds, but the grounds of our hopes, & the basis of our felicity.

It is further requisite, that our performance of good works be not only abundant, but constant.
The expression is, always abounding, of this is a necessity not accidentally inserted, but of great importance, is absolutely necessary for answering the great ends of religion. To be good virtues only in occasion, as it were by accident, will neither satisfy heaven nor earth, neither answer the demands of God nor man; and even if it would, it is by no means sufficient for our own purposes. All intervals ofours in a virtuous course are so many obstacles both to our happiness and improvement; they are “like ledges of rock thrown into a smooth, gliding stream, and break its course, and make its flour irregular and useless to any of the purposes of man's convenience. Virtue must be Rooted in our minds, so as to become a fixed, steady, uniform principle, communicating health to the life blood of the soul, giving beauty and vigor to every thought of every action. There is no condition of life, no circumstance, be it prosperous or adverse, in which we may not find opportunities for exercising great and important virtues, and therefore it is always in our power to exercise good works of the body or improvements. Let us then understand the Apostle, as exhorting us to an universal care and endeavour to fulfill the will of God; a constant solicitude to act and to walk as we ought to do, in all cases, at all times, on all occasions.

2. We proceed to consider the motive to this duty: as much as we know that great labour is not seen in the deed. In these words more is meant than is expressed. The labour of virtue will be so far from being in vain, that they will turn to the highest account, will be amply richly rewarded. It is one of those modes of speech in which there is a subtilty of sense to more than is mentioned. And here we may observe that one great reason, not only for doing good works, but for abounding in good words, is that such cannot be understood, that is, are not merely for secures the prom-
wed reward. We cannot pretend to measure out the degree of virtue, which will suffice for the accomplishment of salvation; therefore, if there are no other reason, it is our interest to take peculiar care, that we do not fall short. Since the prize is so inestimably great, we certainly cannot be too solicitous to obtain it, or too cautious that we do not lose it by seeming negligence. We should, if possible, aim above the mark that this we may not at least fall beneath it. Besides, does not experience teach us, that we have abundant reason to make great allowances for the partiality of judgment, and the power of self-deception? Our hearts are full of deceit, and are constantly apt to impose upon us, by suggesting that we are wiser, and better, and greater proficients in virtue than we really are. There are a thousand chances, therefore, that we should be deceived and misled, unless we allow for the prejudices and indulgences of self-love. Besides, we may observe that the greater progress we make in virtue, the less danger we incur of being at any time seduced or drawn astray. Whatever care we may take, we cannot, if we cannot be in this life, completely secure. Yet, when we are in the midst of snares; and it concerns us, of course, to remove ourselves as far as possible from the dominions of sin, that we may place ourselves at a great a distance as possible from the danger. The further we proceed, we are in so much less hazard of retreating. The better we practice our duty, the more delightful and satisfactory it will become. In these respects, therefore, virtuous endeavors, however diligent, vigorous, can never be in vain. On the contrary, they, loaded with rich rewards, tend to excite to excellent purposes. But no may direct our thoughts to still higher considerations. To abandon good works not only affords to our security, but directly promotes our welfare, and enlarges our prospects of happiness. That virtue in general is naturally productive of felicity, yet yields
the truest & purest enjoyment: partly in heaven, partly in reversion, no one, who has observed the moral government of God, can deny. Hence it follows, that every accession of virtue must be a progressive accession of happiness. If in its own nature it perfects, improves, & blesses the human mind, the consequence must be, that it cannot fail to operate, & produce these happy effects, in proportion to the measure & degree in which it prevails. Here then is a motive: I should quicker beat & animate exaction. Every virtue, as it is acquired, every good habit, as it is gained, may be considered as a new purchase, a fresh possession, a jewel of great price, enriching the soul; a new fountain of enjoyment, springing up in the heart; a real good, an actual treasure. That cannot fail, that cannot fade. Some, as with the lines of distinction, every other possession, cannot cast even a passing obscurity on the brightness of this; the grave, that closes its heavy petals on all else of man, has no power over.

When the good things of earth, your temporal possessions shall have mouldered away, vanished forever, when the pomp & vanity of life shall have with their own, like that of the morning cloud, is no more to be found; when all the works of man shall perish, & the planets to melt with present heat, even at that moment, that object of terror & desolation shall remain, spiritual life up their head, a triumph in glory over the works of nature, the ruins of creation. The objects, for which we spent & toiled so adventurously in this world, cannot accompany us. be the land, whether we are all. are afit to look upon these riches of the soul, absent of unsubstantial, shadowy possessions, while the mind is sensible & corporeal affairs, that solid; but the soul exists, at least, if nothing else, will then evince its presence. What we now look upon as the substance, will prove to be a shadow: what we now regard as a shade.
will be found to be the only enduring substance, the only good, that will remain undegraded, untarnished, flourish more and more through endless ages. As far as we are concerned, every thing through the whole of our existence depends on wisdom and virtue. All our hopes are fixed & centered there; without them, what could the world afford, that should be so far as important? To possess these is to be rich in the abstract sense; for they are not only true riches, but undefiled, incorruptible, inestimable; they are copies of uncreated excellence & transcendent of divine perfections. God himself is blessed by them; & the infinite happiness consists chiefly in the perfect fruition of them.

Man was created in the image of God; of the only way we have of restoring to that image, & we have so defaced & distorted; its proper brightness & beauty, is by abounding in the works of the Lord, by cherishing every remnant of that feeling with which he loved us back to our kind. Therefore by improving under the tuition of this providence. Be our sense ever so small, how wonderful ever so marvellous, still with regard to ourselves, our labour can never be in vain. The events of things are not in our hands, but virtue & goodness are, according to our improvement, to will be our happiness.

But this is not all. Besides the natural advantages resulting from the practice of virtue, God has promised an additional reward to the righteous.

The foundation of happiness must ever be laid in the state of the position of the heart: yet upon this foundation infinite power & goodness may raise what superstructures it please. & may make suitable additions of various kinds. The felicity of the good may commence on earth, but it stops not till it reaches to heaven. New channels of enjoyment may be opened; new blessings conferred more & greater than we can now conceive. But still further: God has not only closed that He will thus reward & bless, & glorify.
the righteous, but that He will do this in proportion to the degrees of their virtue and the improvement of their talents. They are so beautifully shall also reign eternally. As they, who abound in good works, shall also abound in bliss of glory, such is the idea, with the Apostle gives us, when he represents to the saints in heaven as outshining one another, even as one star differeth from another star in glory. For this the proper object of God's favour of kindness. The the brighter any man's virtue is, & the more abundant it is, it must surely be rewarded & distinguished accordingly.

Such, then, is the duty, & such the motive set before us in the text. We see our interest, & why then shall we not pursue it? Does it not appear to you to be for the soul & its body, heaven & earth, & eternity to come? Do you not know that all other treasures shall become useless or worthless, these enduring treasures shall abide the great test, & procure you admission into the mansions of glory?

"Therefore," saith the word of the Apostle, "thrice lose my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
Almighty God, without thee we are nothing, have nothing. Enable us we beseech thee to serve thee faithfully & to do our duty. May we be steadfast, unconquerable, always advancing in the work of God, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. May we be careful & diligent, earnest & zealous in the discharge of all our moral obligations. May we strive to glorify thee, to imitate thy perfections. Give us grace to cultivate truth, righteousness, benevolence, charity. May we seek to possess ourselves of these virtues, above all else. May we strive for the bliss of happiness to man. May our hearts be animated by the prospect of that bliss, advancement to happiness, which shall be the endless fruition of the after life of those who serve thee diligently here. - Being or are encompassed.
At home, Aug. 24th. 1823. - afternoon.
At home, Friday lecture, Jan. 27, 1823.