No. 97

Sermon for a Communion Sabbath.
97.

Ephesians 2. 4, 5, 6. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

On no subject does St. Paul dwell with so much feeling of fervor, as on the goodness of God, manifested in the Gospel of Christ. This is the text, that touches his heart more deeply than any other. Whence he approaches it, his spirit seems to rise to a noble height, and, as it were, to break in a manner worthy of the subject. He dwells upon it with increasing delight; he weaves it in every side, finds new beauties and new glories; and even when his at-
tent on is devoted to other things, the still carries with him a mind that loves to linger on the good feelings of great joy, that came from heaven. In his letter to the Ephesians, from which our text is selected, he is full of earnest in speaking of the coming of God, as it appears in the Christian dispensation. He assures his converts at Ephesus, that, while their faith in him was to him a source of such joy, he hopes in his prayers to heaven; in referring the same God, who communicat ed of the fulness of his being, wisdom to Jesus, to enlighten, to sanctify, to purify their minds; to work in them by the same spirit, as he wrought in the Hebrews, y raised them far above all principalities, y powers, y dominions, y masteries, y made him head of all things to the church. Having this vision of the exaltation of Jesus, he very beautifully connects this idea with that of the blessings he was about to bestow on them; he associates the exaltation of the disciple with that of the Master; the rewards of dignities of the true followers with those of their leader. But God who is rich in mercy with the great love wherewith he loved us, when we were dead in sins, bath quickened us together; y gave ye are saved; y bath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

We see, then, that the Apostle represents the greatness of God to mankind, as moving him to grant us through the agency of Jesus Christ to the highest, holiest, purest, healthful of the Gospel; for this love is placed in a much stronger light by that consideration, and the Apostle's theme in to be weight on our admiration and gratitude, that man and were "dead in sins." To this point suggested by the text, we will first direct our attention. The goodness of God, that he has done for us through his Son, is enhanced if it can be, if appears in brightest glory, when we reflect on the state of man when the Son was put to death; it is to that state of that time, that the apostle refers, when he says, "even when we were dead in sins, yet hath quickened one of us."—So Paul uses the strong expression, "dead in sins," to represent the deep moral degradation into which mankind had fallen. The cold hand of death, all death had taken hold of the world. There was noth
a blindness, a palsy, a want of feeling in moral religious subjects, so that it was like the coldness and insensibility of death. If you might almost as well expect that they who were fast bound in the prison of the grave, should of their own force break their chains, so much is it, as that mankind should at that time, by the mere force of reason, without some help higher than human, have rescued themselves from that state of moral and spiritual depression of fear, of watchfulness, into which they had fallen.

Such is the allusion contained in the feeble expression of the Apostle; for, every one, who has examined the subject, knows that there is no easy question. The more one has traced the history of man, in the spirit of mediocrity, the deeper, the more the feeling at everybody as we come down the path of time, how much the soul needs light from heaven. How poor, and inefficient, as being man is at best, with all this pride of all his powers, how the tottering of falls like a feeble infant, if instead of God be not extended to hold him up. We speak now of the moral religious concerns of many; and surely one has

the weakness and instability of human beings in these cases been more striking, than at the time when our Blessed Lord is appeared. Scarcely ever was there such a death in man as this. And there was besides a great want of the men of arriving at a better state. The most absurd of all ideas concerning the being of attributes of the Powers above is, the most fluctuating. Tenet, tenet principali in moribus, per

vided all classes of the community. The natural consequence of this state of things was, that even if a Su-

preme Deity were acknowledged in speculation, he would not be regarded as glorified as God, if that the rules of
duty, even if the more so in some degree understood, being

distinct of prudence, would become feeble and almost

enforceable. There is truth in the dark picture drawn

Paul in his letter to the Romans: "because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations; of this foolish heart

and foolish, reposing themselves to be wise, they

became fools." These truths respecting the character of

The Supreme Being, of the relations in which men stand to the Almighty, "in each time -"
the dissemination of its doctrine is a permanent one, and even from childhood are we now taught to believe and to receive. Many are so common with us that we regard with astonishment upon them who is ignorant of them, these truths, that it seems rational, severely carved on the mind of man, at the time of the hustle and bustle. The world was in a state of moral darkness; reason had done much, but what it did was little better than uncertainty, conjecture. It was owing to the influence of these causes that they became as dead to us as expression to "dead in sin." It is to this state of things that all sides, men, as dressing this breathless spirit, who has been converted from heathenism, are brought to the height and goal of the light of Christ.

But the application of this doctrine is not confined to these early days. Now, as well as then, there are those who are "dead in sin." Notwithstanding that God has revealed to us his mind and will, through the truth on earth, it is written, painted on the doors of all who would mark it as it were, with a sunbeam; through our Lord Jesus has been the revelation of a future world brought before us alike its hopes and its fears, of taught us what will be the certain consequences of the actions we perform. The characters we acquire in this world, age it as truly as God has, to reflect how large a part of man kind have discarded the band of heavenly and, thus reached unto them, like the ancient heathens lived without God in the world. He who created us, has formed us with the faculty for the enjoyment of moral existence; if he has communicated knowledge of strength, life, to aid our faculties forever, assist as to answer the great ends of our being—but how often do we refuse this help? strength, turn away from preordained grace, give ourselves up to temptations of the wise. So, in what, do we become "dead in sin." There is a state of infection of rebelliousness, to which mankind are sometimes reduced, that operates on the soul with almost the same fatal effect that death does on the body. The fear and the sense of its presence are gone; conscience has been so often abused, that it has become insensible, willing no more the indulgence of nature, is lost, without place there never was a discerning spirit, for all that is eternal.
We come next to consider the power of grace of these means of grace, with which God hath blessed mankind. In the great case whereunto the bath leadeth us, says the Apostle, he bath quickened us together with Christ. He bath made us sit together in heavenly places. There may be some doubt as to the precise import of these expressions. By some they are considered together, as intended signifying Messiah and all the privileges, means, and happy influence of the grace of God bestowed in man. Others think that grace is an instance of an idiom not uncommon in the original language of the W.T. By which what is yet future is spoken of as if it were past, as that when the Apostle says—He bath quickened me. He bath raised me up, if bath made us sit together in heavenly places, he means that God will quicken us, raise us up, together with Christ, i.e., as he raised his Son Jesus from the dead, so will be raise us from the grave, and make us sit together in heavenly places. According to this interpretation the passage would refer altogether to the doctrine of the future life, with its rewards of grace, as disclosed.
in the Gospel. That it might be so understood, there can be no doubt. But the expression with special reference seems to me properly to stand in contrast with the preceding expression of death in sin. I have just considered. St. Paul having represented mankind as lying in the chambers of death, immediately turns to the bright side of the picture, through the eye of God, who, having wiped away the sins of the world, sits enthroned in Him. And when we consider the expression in this point of view, it appears to us as a noble meaning clothed in a noble figure. As the sun breaks forth upon a scene where but now the deep evidence of darkness of midnight had been, as the first beams of morning call forth a world from its slumber, so did the eye of Omnipotence amid the deepest darkness, amid the verge of the empire of spiritual existence. We could not explain in the language of men, whose fancy was baffled by reasoning in speaking of the all-beth as a memorial of the vice of imperfect form; but there is another view, that of the lifting up of the blind, "The nations poured in glory; behold a king, who spreadeth this day, and triumphs from the tomb."
him, or he raised them up—God as much in mercy: but never
did he so come forth in the fulness of this mercy as when
he quickened the world through the mediation of Jesus
Christ. He raised up his followers together with him, and makes them all
together in heavenly places. Here we see the power of the
presence of the All-manifested in both, in the exaltation
of Jesus, the exaltation of his disciples with him. We are
taught in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, that our Lord, after he had
gone through all the toils of labour of his ministry, af
fer he had stood exposed to the brutal fury of an inhuman
persecution of the enemies while discharging the high priestly
office of ambassador from God to man, after he had thrown
the cable of agony, had gone down to the grave, had come
forth again with life and power; after he had dealt success
fully with death, and was come to heaven, was seated thron
ed in glory, was placed far above all things, in principalities,
and powers, and made head of all things to the church. But
is the spiritual path, which leads to heaven, close? Did he go
down to death, to raise the dead, to give life to them, then turn among those hopeless of seeing him again? Are
the powers of heaven, therefore, needed the great Redeemer, that
heaven?
quicken his mind, a guilty soul, is made to feel that the evil of
his actions are not confined to his own existence, but that he is
a sinner before God, and that his sins are remembered before
his face. The text of the gospel says, "For the wages of sin is
death." This is a truth which can never be forgotten by any
who have been brought to know the reality of their sin. When
the soul is brought to see its own guilt, it is in a state of
contrition. The gospel says, "If we confess our sins, he is
faithful and just to forgive us our sins." This is a comfort to
the guilty soul, for it shows that there is hope for all who are
willing to turn from their evil ways. The text of the gospel
also says, "If we forsake the ways of sin, he will forgive our
transgressions." This is a promise which can never be broken.
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of whom we are saved, not by any works of our own, but wholly by the free and meritorious grace of God.

And now, my sir, that we have seen what God has done for us in the gift of His Son, I cannot conclude without calling special attention to the obligation of reverence, gratitude, and love to the Saviour of the world, unknown as are our rewards. How willing are we to consecrate ourselves unto the service and service of God! How willing are we to consecrate ourselves to the service of the Saviour and of our country, commencing blessings to the latest posterity? How do we dwell upon their actions, and what they say to us? How do we celebrate the memorials entrusted to their hands? Yet what are all their services if all their reward is all that we have been able to accomplish as the ends of our labors? They are but as chaff in the midst. And shall we then refuse the truth of their testimony? No, no! By celebrating the memorial, we place ourselves before the world in the most exalted relations. How do we, it is something more than ungrateful? If you were at the death bed of a friend whom you loved, if that friend before closing his eyes in darkness were to leave a dying request with you
would you not perform it to a friend that request? Such a request, as the Friend of men, has left, before he went to the cross, he said, do this in remembrance of me. And shall this last command of Jesus be neglected? Yea, if we had but as much regard to them, who hath bestowed on us the good tidings of salvation, as we have to our earthly benefactors of friends, the memorial of this life & death would not be taken less seriously.

March 1824.

Moses, from whom we have derived all that we have in this life; all the bases of a higher & better life, will then accept our gratitude, for thy great goodness to us in the eye of x. We bless thee, that thou who art rich in mercy, for the great love wherein thou hast loved us, hath quickened us together; for will forgive what thine children & make them sit together in heavenly places in x. They are here to value, as we ought, our hopes of forgiveness as true. May we improve every opportunity of solemnizing the event of the remembrance of our Lord? may we look to his example, y imitate his spirit. Be with those of us who are about to celebrate the alliance he hath instituted. May we remember that this ordinance is one of the means of our religious society. Having we come at the time, if improve our religious sensibility, can have the time to the one. Your need to do they will.
Athene, March 4th, 1821. Forenoon.
At Dudley, Sept. 20th, 1821. Forenoon.
At Mr. Huntington's, Boston, Feb. 21, 1822. Forenoon.
Athene, Friday lecture, June 29, 1827.