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THE

Evangelical Magazine,

FOR SEPTEMBER, 1796.

[The Directors of the Missionary Society, supposing that the friends of the Institution, would wish to peruse their farewel Address to the Missionaries, requested that it might be inserted in the Evangelical Magazine. The contents of it are so valuable, that we give it the most conspicuous place, persuaded that every serious person, who reads it, will be highly gratified.]

A FAREWEL LETTER,

From the DIRECTORS *of the* MISSIONARY SOCIETY, *to the* MISSIONARIES *going forth to the Heathen in the South-Sea Islands; August* 9, 1796.

THE Directors, acting in name of the Society, feel a paternal solicitude in behalf of the Missionaries, whom, by the good hand of God upon them, they are enabled to send forth to this great work. As an affectionate parent parting with his youthful sons, when they are going forth to the field of danger and of honour, is hardly able to give over his admonitions; so, dear brethren, beloved in our Lord, after all the counsels and encouragements you have heard from the mouths of many individuals, we, as having a special charge of your interests, and those of the Society, cannot dismiss you into the arduous warfare, without pouring out our hearts unto you in this parting exhortation.

"The Lord himself watch, and be witness between you and us, when we are absent one from another," if there is not in our hearts an affectionate, deep, and permanent concern, and longing towards you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ. The evident tokens of the grace of God in you, and your generous ardour impelling you to engage in this work, have bound our hearts to you by the strongest ties. It abates, however, in no small degree, our anxiety respecting you, that we are able to place you under the care of such a Captain, one whom we accept as a peculiarly valuable gift of divine love to the Society. That God hath singularly prepared him, by his providence and grace, for so important a trust, cannot be doubted. To you it belongs to sweeten his voluntary exile and separation from his family, his country, and his Christian friends. To a government so mild and intelli-

gent, your submission will be unreluctant and uniform. Beholding in him the kindness of your Saviour, you will daily, according to the expression of the wrestling Patriarch, see your Captain's face, "as though you saw the face of God." We hope to receive from him, on his return, such an account of your grateful, affectionate intercourse with him, your goodly order and subordination, your diligent improvement of time and opportunities, your acquiescence in his authority and counsels relative to your settlement in the islands, as will be "like cold waters to the thirsty soul," and will greatly establish our confidence, that you are persons whom "the King of glory will delight to honour." If there should be a revolting individual, it will become the whole body of Missionaries to set their faces against him.

Brethren, we cannot but be solemnly concerned that you may well understand the nature, and feel the weight of the service, to which our Lord calls you. "We live, if you stand fast in the Lord," if you quit yourselves like men, if you are faithful to your trust, if you shine as lights in the world, if you turn many to righteousness.

We, therefore, intreat you to revolve, in your frequent thoughts, the preciousness of that treasure which is committed to your trust. Into your hands we commit the great deposit, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God; even the mystery of love and salvation which came from the bosom and the bowels of Jehovah; that mystery which was the substance of God's earliest revelations, and in subserviency to which the laws of the Most High, obscured by human folly, were republished with such terrible majesty at Mount Sinai; that mystery, the precious certainty and sweetness of which has been sealed by the testimony of such a cloud of witnesses throughout all ages; and, above all, which God the Son sealed with his own blood; this is the treasure which we request and require you to convey, unadulterated, to the heathen. If you are ashamed of this Gospel; if you add to it, or diminish from it; if you lose sight of its leading articles---the supreme and eternal Deity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the justification by his blood and obedience, the sanctification by his word and Holy Spirit, the sure promise and hope of eternal life, founded on his love and power; if you dishonour this Gospel by your spirit and behaviour, the crime will be great, the consequences will be grievous and mournful.

We send you forth, dear brethren, with this Gospel in your hands, as the rod of Jehovah's strength, to work wonders among the heathen; "to open their eyes, to turn them from

from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified." This, and nothing less, is the object of our desires and endeavours. This, O beloved Missionaries, is your work, to rescue immortal souls from the endless burnings of hell, to raise them to the joys and glories of heaven. Meditate night and day on the unmeasurable importance of this work, in the most secret and unconnected instance of real success.

But behold, we beseech you, dear brethren, a whole world looking on, while you accomplish this great warfare. When we survey the connections of these endeavours, and their possible, yea probable consequence, our hearts are ready to fail, and to sink down overwhelmed, at the solemn view.

You know that the eyes of many thousands of the righteous in this land are upon you. How many righteous souls would be wounded, and made sad, how many closets covered with a cloud, how many public assemblies hung with sackcloth, should criminality on your part occasion a failure of this attempt! The wicked also at home are looking on; they watch for your halting. The unclean rebel, the haughty infidel, the scoffer, the adversary of the Lord, is ready to transmit your shame, fraughted with blasphemy, all over the country. In foreign European countries, amidst the crashing fall of Antichrist, the abomination of desolation, the defying flag of infidelity appears unfurled. Nations of infidels will strengthen themselves, and blaspheme the holy power of the Gospel, if, through your negligence, or perfidy, it should be baffled. Behold the immense crouds of the heathen who now cover South America, China, the East-Indies, and other Pagan countries, and their children, and children's children, prepared to pour their curses to all eternity on the men who, vested with the sacred character of Missionaries, disfigured the glorious Gospel by their folly and impurity, who excited fatal disgust at the alone medicine of perishing souls.

Dear brethren, we mention these things for your warning; but we hope better things of you, and gladly turn our thoughts to a brighter prospect. In connection with your humble, faithful, and persevering labours, we behold not only the immortal fire kindled in many souls, under your immediate charge, but diffusing itself in all directions, and through all succeeding ages. The righteous at home will be comforted, enlivened, and roused to their work. The wicked will be astonished, and awake from their fatal slumbers. In foreign European countries, the ferocity of Atheism will be curbed, and

and the end of the desolations of Antichrist clearly understood. Other Missionaries already engaged in the work, inspired with fresh courage, will redouble their exertions. From region to region, in the Pagan world, the inquiry will pass, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?"

Consider, we intreat you, beloved brethren, in what light these things shall appear, when you enter the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, and are sensibly approaching to the utmost point of time bordering with eternity; and, still more, when your separated spirits are appearing at the tribunal of Christ, and directly under his glorious eyes. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, constrained by his love, do your utmost, while it is day, to persuade men, that you may be made manifest to God, and also in their consciences."

We hope, dear brethren, you will believe us, when we say that the difficulties and dangers of your work lie near our hearts. Be assured you shall not go through the waters and fires alone. We, and many others, will be with you in the Spirit. You will be borne up in the arms of thousands to whom the God of Jacob hath not said, "Seek ye me in vain?" In your weakness we will be weak, in your fears we will tremble, in your distresses we will suffer, in your consolations we will rejoice. Therefore, suffer the word of exhortation, and let these sayings sink down into your ears. Contemplate those everlasting arms that are underneath you. In the hour of embarrassment, fainting, and alarm, "take heed, and be quiet, fear not." "Enter into your chambers;" go into the sanctuary of strength, even into the inner recesses of divine power and love. Remember that the battle is the Lord's. Dishonour not your glorious God by unbelieving timidity. "Glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea." And when you are become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and are walking on your high places, cast back a look of supplicating compassion towards your brethren at home, then weak in comparison of those feeble, "who, according to the promise, are as David, and those Davids that are as the mighty angels of God."

When your path is doubtful, look upwards for the counsel of him who hath said, "I will guide thee with mine eye; I will bring the blind by a way that they know not." Discouraged with the delay of success, stir up yourselves to take hold of God. Look into the everlasting covenant of promises,

mises, which is mighty, and shall endure when the mountains depart, and the hills are removed.

In these distant lands make the Lord himself your habitation. In him you shall be at home. The mountain, the stream, the shore, the wide-spreading tree shall become sweet by his presence. From the scene of death you will point to them, saying, "There God Almighty appeared to me, and blessed me."

We address to you the heavenly salutation, "O men, greatly beloved, fear not: Peace be unto you, be strong, yea, be strong." Remember them, "who, through faith, have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens; of whom others were tortured not accepting deliverance, were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Your victory is, "not to fear them who cruelly kill the body, but to love them with a love strong as death." This victory you obtain, abundantly, through "him that loved you. For we trust that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Dear brethren, what shall we more say? That you may be cheered and revived by the presence of the high and lofty One, you must be of a contrite and humble spirit. The inscription written in your hearts must be, "The chief of sinners,---less than the least of all saints." Many of you are now drawn forth from obscure situations, and in the early period of life, and are placed conspicuous in the view of the world. The Lord forbid they should prove "such novices, as being lifted up with pride, fall into the condemnation of the devil!"

Sorrowful and ashamed we will hear the report, if any of you fall by those enticements, "which have cast down many wounded, and by which many strong men have been slain." Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation; lest you should appear before the heathen "as fools in Israel," and be found "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." "Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing

springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." An austere negative purity, however, is not enough: You must convince the heathen that "the commandments of the Lord," which exclude "fornication and all uncleanness from being once named among saints, are not grievous;" that you enjoy liberty and delight in renouncing the impure pleasures of the flesh; and that, like the angels of God, you behold sinners with abhorrence and compassion, not with envy, while they eagerly drink these polluted and empoisoned waters.

Such virtue as this cannot be maintained, amidst continual temptation, without the presence of the Lord in a great degree. And that presence will forsake you, and leave you a prey to the adversary, if you should indulge discord and discontents. When the Corinthians had "muttered perverseness of this kind, soon the cockatrice-eggs of infamous impurity were hatched among them;" and the sweet spirit of Paul, wounded by their "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults," feared lest his God "should humble him among them, and he should bewail many that had sinned, and had not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness which they had committed." In a band of Missionaries, however, a cold negative union is not sufficient; there should be that powerful melting of love, which the apostolical exhortation demands, when it pronounces that "Christians ought to lay down their lives for their brethren," and which that glorious couple exemplified, "who for the life of Paul laid down their own necks."

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we point the denunciations of divine anger against the man who shall first prove wilfully false to his cause; against the man who shall obstinately cherish the aspiring of vain ambition; against the man who shall sink into the arms of a harlot; against the man who shall fan the latent sparks of discord and contention; against the wicked and slothful servant; saying to such a man, if he continues impenitent, in the words of the great Missionary Apostle, "The Lord reward him according to his works." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maran-atha!"

Finally, dear brethren, we give you in charge to convey to the people of Otaheite, and other islands whither you may come,

come, the most tender love of our hearts. As soon as you can lisp their language, tell them that we earnestly desire their good and salvation, though we may never see them in this world. Testify to them that the God of heaven, who hath stirred up this affection towards them in our hearts, offers to save them, and to shew them that love of his which will fill them with pleasure in this world, and in the world to come; and that if they hearken to the message of salvation, we and many thousands now in this island will embrace them, on the other side of death, with unspeakable joy.

And now, beloved brethren, whom we have often lately seen with pleasure, whose faces we shall, probably, see no more, we bid you farewel in the bowels of our dearest Lord; once more protesting thus in his presence, and in the presence of his holy angels, "If we forget, neglect, and wilfully desert these Missionaries, let our right hands forget their cunning; if we do not remember the work of God among the heathen, let our tongues cleave to the roof of our mouth; if we prefer not the prosperity of this work above our chief temporal joy!"

We deliver you over into the hands of him who is faithful and true, "commending you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified! The good will of him who dwelt in the bush be upon those who are now to be separated from their brethren! Jehovah bless thee and keep thee: Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace! Fear not, saith Jesus, I am the first and the last. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. My peace I give unto you: Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid! Unto him that is able to keep you and us from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever! Amen."

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS;

In Answer to Mr. RALPH WAKE, *of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who requests "an Explanation of* Matt. xviii. 23, *and following Verses, according to the Calvinistic Plan.*

THE manifest design of the parable is to impress upon us the duty of forgiveness one to another, from the consideration of God's freely forgiving us. That in the parable, I imagine,

which struck the querist as inconsistent with Calvinistic principles, was the supposition of a man being given up to the tormenters, whose sins had been forgiven. Some expositors, in order to solve this difficulty, suppose the punishment to mean his being given up to *church* censures; others, to temporal calamities, and the accusations of a guilty conscience: But it appears to me that this is altogether foreign from the design of Christ. Our Lord certainly meant to suggest to *all the professors of Christianity, all the subjects of his visible kingdom*, that unless they forgave men their trespasses, they themselves should not be forgiven, but should be cast into endless torment. The true solution of the difficulty I take to be this: It is common with our Lord in his parables to address men *upon their own principles*; not according to what they were in fact, but what they were in profession and expectation. For example: "There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine *just persons, that need no repentance*. The *whole* need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call *the righteous*, but sinners to repentance." Not that there were any amongst mankind who were *righteous, whole*, and *needed no repentance* in fact, but merely in their own account. The *elder son* in the parable in Luke xv. is doubtless intended to represent the scribes and pharisees, who at that time drew near, and murmured at Christ's receiving sinners, ver. 1, 2. And yet this elder son is allowed to have been very obedient (at least he is not contradicted in this matter), and to have a large interest in his father's inheritance; not because it was so in fact, but as reasoning with them upon their own principles.

But what is nearer still to the case in hand, is the parable addressed to Simon the pharisee. (Luke vii. 36---48). Our Lord here supposes that Simon was a *little* sinner, and a *forgiven* sinner; and yet, in fact, he was neither. No set of men were greater sinners in reality than the pharisees, Matt. xxiii. 27---33.; and this man gave proof of his being in an impenitent and unforgiven state. But Christ reasoned with him upon his own principles; *q. d.* "You reckon yourself a *little* sinner, and that what few failings you have will doubtless be forgiven you: Well, be it so; this woman is a great sinner, and so accounts of herself. I forgave her all her transgressions, and therefore you need not wonder at her conduct; her love to me is greater than yours, even allowing, for argument's sake, that your love is sincere.

Thus in the parable under consideration: Our Lord solemnly warns all the members of his visible kingdom, who professed

professed to be the people of God, and who laid their expectations of being forgiven of him, without determining whether those professions were sincere, or those expectations well-founded; that, if they forgave not men their trespasses, neither would his heavenly Father forgive them their trespasses. Whether they were sincere or not made no difference as to the argument: If a person lays his account with being forgiven of God, and is unforgiving to his brother, his conduct is nevertheless inconsistent or wicked; for his being under the power of self-deception, his motive is the same as if it had been otherwise.

There are some subjects that I feel myself incapable of throwing any fresh light upon. Where this is the case, I think it my duty to decline them. Under this description I must reckon the questions of a correspondent who signs himself *A Berean;* and another, who has addressed a letter to me under the signature of *Candidus*, concerning *the decrees of God.* I feel difficulties upon those great subjects, on which I had rather pray, at present, than write.

GAIUS.

THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE OF PERSONAL RELIGION.

WE complain of the badness of the times, and we have much cause to do so. But remember a more awful period is yet to come. God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world. We must *all* appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil. Withdraw your attention from the world, dear brother, and place it on thyself. Consider what will be your lot in the solemn judgment-day. Amidst the hurry, the confusion, and the wickedness of the present times, and amidst all the sinful boastings and bold temptations of men, remember that *every one* must give an account of himself to God. Inquire, then, what preparation have you for this account? Have you believed, repented, reformed, and done the works of God? O my soul! hast thou fled to Christ for refuge? Hath the Holy Spirit convinced me of sin, and made it *bitter* to me, and rendered the Lord Jesus precious in my esteem? Do I delight in holiness? If, since my first enlightening, I have unhappily stept aside, in any instance, from the paths of purity and peace, have I had grace to lament it? Am I returned with weeping and supplication? Do I come to the cross,

as

as a criminal, for mercy? Am I more watchful, more prayerful, more diligent in reading and meditating on the Scriptures, and more circumspect in all my ways? I *must* have personal religion, or I am undone. A judgment and eternity convince me of its absolute necessity. It is the one thing needful. And if I am indeed a new creature in Christ Jesus, all is well. Death cannot hurt me. Judgment can do me no harm. Eternity will be my endless joy; for there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

T.

THE DIGNITY OF THE MINISTERIAL CHARACTER.

(ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND.)

IT must be acknowledged that the ministerial office is the most important and honourable that can be sustained by man. If it be of importance to be a physician, to restore the decayed health of mortals, or an honour to be a statesman, to conduct the affairs of a nation; how much more so to be an ambassador for Christ! To this dignity you and I are raised. Let us endeavour to maintain it. "I magnify mine office," said the great apostle; and despicable must that minister appear, who degrades it. That a minister may act in correspondence with his station, he should be tenacious of his honour, know whence it comes, and how to make a proper use of it. The embellishments of human wisdom, which captivate the vulgar, and great names, the amusement of little minds, will be disregarded by a man of spiritually-refined taste. His honour consists not in dignified titles, either civil or ecclesiastical; but in the approbation of his divine Master, and the success that he affords him. Ministers are the servants of the most high God, who shew unto men the way of salvation. They are called to an intimate converse with him; to a familiarity with the most sublime objects; are entrusted with the important truths of the Gospel, and the weighty concerns of immortal souls. O the rich treasure that is committed to these earthen vessels! Mean and contemptible as they may be in themselves, yet they are thus honoured. Commissioned by the great Redeemer, furnished with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and called by divine Providence, they come forth to the arduous, yet noble employment of preaching the Gospel. Their credentials are