

THE

CROSS OF CHRIST

THE

CHRISTIAN'S GLORY.

Shewing,

That in Christ's Cross we have the richest provision for our spiritual wants, a foundation of the sublimest hope, and a fountain of the most exuberant joy.

A

SERMON

Preached at the Visitation of the Reverend Mr. *John Brown*.

By the Rev. Mr. *JAMES HERVEY*,
Minister of the Gospel.

Gal. vi. 14. *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

REV. vii. 14. 15—*These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne.*

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Christian's Glory.

A
S E R M O N, &c.

GAL. II. 14. *God forbid that I should glory, save
in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

THE cross of Christ, was the favourite topic of St. Paul's contemplation.—The cross of Christ was the chosen subject of his sermons, and the grand theme of his writings.—At all times, and in every capacity, he professed, he avowed, he gloried in the cross of Christ—Nay, what is very remarkable, he gloried in *nothing* else—And what is still more observable, he *abhorred* the thought of glorying in any thing else. He speaks of such a practice, in the language of detestation and dread; accounting it a high degree both of folly and of wickedness; *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It may, therefore, be an employ worthy of our present attention, to enquire into the *nature*, the *reasonableness*, and the *wisdom*, of this resolution. All which, I hope, will appear, if we consider,

I. In what the apostle would *not* glory.

II. In what he *did* glory.

III. What *reason* he had, to glory in the cross of Christ.

These points being briefly dispatched, I shall beg leave to add a word of *Application*; suggested by the tenor of the discourse, and adapted to the circumstances

cumstances of my several hearers. And may that adorable Jesus, who has exchanged his cross for an heavenly crown, accompany all with his divine blessing.

Let us then enquire,

I. In what the apostle did *not* glory?—Not in the *greatness* of his *learning* as a scholar. He was brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*; educated by the most famous tutor of the age. Nor was his genius, or his industry, inferior to the other advantages of his education. Yet all these advantages, with their correspondent acquisitions, he accounted no better than pompous ignorance, or refined folly.

Not in the *strictness* of his *life*, as a Jew.—In this respect he profited above his equals: *Was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, Acts xxii. 3.* after the strictest sect of their religion, *he lived a Pharisee, Acts xxvi. 5.* Was zealous, exceedingly zealous, of the whole ceremonial law, and of all the traditional constitutions. Which accomplishments must finish his character among his countrymen; must open his way to some of the first honours of the nation; and give him a name among those worthies who were reputed *the excellent of the earth*. But what others counted gain, this he counted loss for Christ.

Not in the *eminency* of his *gifts*, nor in the *extent* of his *usefulness*, as a christian minister.—He had been caught up into the third heaven; had heard the words of God, and seen the vision of the Almighty; had wrought all manner of wonders, and signs, and mighty deeds—What was still more valuable, he had planted churches, and converted souls. His labours had gone out into all lands, and his words unto the ends of the earth.—Yet all these acquirements, before the infinite God, were *defective*; all these performances, in point of justifi-

fication, were *insufficient*; Therefore, in *none* of these he gloried.—Which reminds me of the second enquiry.

II. In what the apostle *did* glory.—He gloried in a cross. Strange! What so *scandalous* as a cross? On a cross rebellious slaves were executed. The cross was *execrable* among men, and *accursed* even by God, *Gal. iii. 13*. Yet the apostle glories in the cross.—Crucifixion not being used among us, the expression does not sound so *harsh*; neither is the idea so *horrid*. But to the ear of a Galatian, it conveyed much the same meaning, as if the apostle had gloried in a halter; gloried in the gallows, gloried in a gibbet †.

“Stu-

† Some persons, I am informed, were disgusted at these words, *halter, gallows, gibbet*, they are so *horridly contemptible*!—To whom I would reply; That the cross in point of ignominy and torment, included all *this* and *more*. Unless the English reader form to himself some such image, he will never be able to apprehend the scandalous nature, and shocking circumstances, of his divine Master's death.

The words, I must confess, were diversified, and the sentiment was reiterated, on purpose to affect the mind with this astonishing truth. Neither can I prevail upon myself to expunge the expressions; unless I could substitute others of a more ignominious and execrable import. Only I would beg of the serious reader, to spend a moment in the following reflection:—“Is it so? that
 “ a polite and delicate ear, can hardly endure so much
 “ as the sound of the words? How amazing then was
 “ the condescension! How charming and adorable the
 “ goodness of God's illustrious Son; to bear all that is
 “ signified by these intolerably vile terms! Bear it
 “ *willingly*, bear it *cheerfully*, for us men, and our
 “ *salvation!*”

“ Stupid creature! (perhaps some may reply) “ To undervalue the most substantial endowments, “ and glory in infamy itself!”—But stop a moment, and hear the apostle farther. He glories in the cross of Christ; that illustrious person, who was anointed to be the all-instructing Prophet, the all-atoning Priest, and the all-conquering King of the church.—In the cross of Christ Jesus; who, by the discharge of all those important offices, should save his people from the dominion of sin, and from the damnation of hell.—In the cross of Christ Jesus, our Lord; and not ours only, but Lord of all; who doth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. *Dan. iv. 35. Who bath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS, Rev. xix. 16.*

And is it possible for any human heart, to contemplate the cross of so divine a Being, and not to glory? Is it possible to say, ‘ Angels he rules over ‘ you; but he died on a cross for me;’ and not exult in such transporting beneficence?—This will be more evident, if we examine,

III. What *reason* the apostle had, to glory in the cross of Christ.—The cross, tho’ in itself an ignominious tree, yet being the cross of Christ, is infinitely ennobled. It becomes the tree of life. It bears the divinest fruit. Its clusters are all spiritual and heavenly blessings. Two or three of those clusters, you will permit me to select; and may the God of all mercy, make them better than a feast to every humble soul!

One blessing is the *pardon of sin*. The pardon of *all* sin, original and actual: sin that is remember’d, and sin that is forgotten: sin, however circumstanced, or however aggravated. The pardon of all was purchased by the death of Christ,—com-

pletely purchased;—so that, against the true believer, sin shall never rise up in judgment; shall not so much as be mentioned unto him; *Ezek. xviii. 22.* shall be done away, as though it had never been. For thus saith the ambassador of the Prince of peace; *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that thro' this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, Acts xiii. 38.*—Oh my soul! my guilty soul! what are all the kingdoms of the world, and the glories of them, compared with this ineffable blessing! Yet this is but one among a multitude.

Another benefit, accruing from the cross of Christ, is, *reconciliation with God.*—*When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, Rom. v. 10.* Not pardoned only, but accepted from a state of enmity, restored to a state of favour, even that favour which is better than life, *Psaln lxiii. 4.*—A privilege of such superlative excellency, that it was celebrated in the hymns of angels. When the heavenly host uttered a song, this was the subject of their harmonious joy: *Glory be to God in the highest; and on earth peace; good-will towards men, Luke ii. 14.* “By the birth of
“ this wonderful child, and the death he shall suf-
“ tain, peace is made between heaven and earth.
“ And not peace only, but a divine friendship † com-
“ mences. God regards the poor apostate race of
“ men,

† There seems to be a beautiful gradation in this angelic hymn. *Good-will* is more expressive, and denotes a richer blessing than *Peace*.—The original *Eudoxia*, is a word of the most amiable and noble meaning. It signifies a very high esteem; and a very tender benevolence. By a word of the same import, the Almighty Father expresses his infinite satisfaction, in the person and undertaking of his beloved Son; *Matth. iii. 17.*

“men, not only without indignation, but with
“complacency and delight. He rejoices over them,
“to do them good, *Deut. xxviii. 63* ||.

Another benefit is *holiness*: Or, if you please
the true the Christian morality.—Let none think,
the believer in Jesus disparages true morality. True
morality is the image of the blessed God. It is
most charmingly delineated throughout the whole
Bible. It is the beginning of heaven in the human
soul. And its proper origin is from the cross of
our divine Master.—For, through the merits of
his death, sinners are made partakers of the holy
Spirit; who writes upon their hearts, and makes
legible in their conversation, what was antiently
written upon the mitre of the high-priest, HOLI-
NESS TO THE LORD.—And oh! what a *motive*
is the cross of Christ to the exercise of every virtue!
He died; my Lord, my Judge, my King, died;
to redeem me from all iniquity, and make me ze-
alous of good works.’ How powerfully, far beyond
any naked instructions, or abstract reasonings, do
such considerations invite us—urge us—constrain
us, to renounce all ungodliness, and adorn the go-
spel of God our Saviour §! *2 Cor. v. 14.*

Ano-

|| Would my reader have the liveliest paraphrase on
his passage; Or see the actings of this divine compla-
cency, described with inimitable delicacy? Let him at-
tend to the prophet Zephaniah: *The Lord thy God, in*
the midst of thee, is mighty, He will save: He will re-
joice over thee with joy: He will rest in his love: He
will joy over thee with singing, chap. iii. 17.

§ Religion! Thou the soul of happiness;
And groaning Calvary, of Thee! *There shine*
The noblest truths; there strongest motives sting!
There, sacred violence assaults the soul;
There, nothing but compulsion is forborn.

Night Thoughts, N. 4.

Another blessing is, *victory over death*.—This also is the fruit of that once detested, but now ever beloved tree. For thus it is written; *That through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their life-time subjected to bondage*, Heb. ii. 14, 15. The devil is said to have the power of death; because, by tempting too successfully, our first parents, he brought death into the world; because, by tempting their posterity to sin, and too often prevailing, he arrays death in horror; he arms death with its sting. But Christ, by expiating our guilt, has disarmed the last enemy; has taken away its sting; and made not loss but gain to die, *Phil. i. 21*.—The gay and the healthy, know not how to form an estimate of this deliverance. Nor can any words of mine describe it, with proper energy. Go to dying beds there you will learn its true worth. Ask some agonizing friend; he, and he alone, can tell you, what a blessing it is, to have the king of terrors converted into a messenger of peace.

One blessing more I would mention, and earnestly wish it, in due time, to all my hearers; *An entrance into heaven*. This too is the produce of our Redeemer's cross.—St. John saw a bright assembly of happy beings, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: rejoicing before the throne of God. *These*, said one of the venerable elders *are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne* Rev. vii. 9, 14, 15.—They came out of great tribulation: They suffered, it is probable, in the service of Christ. Perhaps they laid down their lives for his sake. But *this* was not their passport into the regions of bliss—*They washed their robes*

in the blood of the Lamb: They had applied to their own souls, the merits and atonement of the crucified Jesus. By *this* means, they were presented without spot and blameless. On *this* account, they were admitted to see the king of heaven in his beauty, *Isa.* xxxiii. 17. and to be ever, ever, with the Lord.

Since then the cross of Christ, was demonstrative of such stupendous *love*; since it is productive of benefits, innumerable, invaluable, and eternal; was there not a cause, for the apostle to glory on this behalf?—Nay, might not the very stones have cried out, to reproach him with insensibility and ingratitude, if he had neglected to glory in the cross of Christ?—And since this love was shewed; these benefits were procured; not for *him* only, but for us, and for all generations: does not this afford me an opportunity, of applying the doctrine to each particular hearer?

1. Let me address, or rather let me congratulate, my brethren in the ministry.—Though you cannot controul the laws of nature; though you cannot see into the secrets of futurity; you have the same cause of glorying, with the very chiefest of the apostles. A cause of glorying, which that holy man of God esteemed, far above all such miraculous abilities. You have the cross of Christ,

For your *study*, as *men* :

For your *hope*, as *Christians* :

For your *preaching*, as *ministers*.

For your *study*, as *men*. Here the reasoning faculties may exert themselves, with everlasting improvement, and everlasting delight.—Here, we contemplate the wonders, the unparalleled wonders of a God made man: dying, as a pattern of patience: as a martyr for truth; as an all-perfect sacrifice for sin.—Here the Lord Jehovah hath fully granted, what his servant Moses so earnestly requested, *Exod.*

xxxiii. 18. He hath made all his glory to pass before the astonished eyes of angels, and of men. — Here *justice* has set her most awful terrors in array; even while *goodness* appears, with inexpressible loveliness, and the most attractive beauty. Here, *truth*, more unshaken than a rock, takes her immoveable stand; and *mercy*, tenderer than the mother's tear, yearns with bowels of everlasting pity. — In a word; the cross of Christ is a conspicuous theatre, on which *all* the divine perfections unite; and harmonize, and shine forth with transcendent lustre.

As *Christians*, we have, in the cross of Christ, the richest provision for our spiritual wants. This is a foundation of the sublimest *hope*, and a fountain of the most exuberant *joy*. This affords matter for the deepest *humility*; and yields fuel for the most flaming *love*. Faith in our crucified Jesus, is an ever-active principle of the most chearful and exact *obedience*: is an ample and inexhaustible magazine, from which we may fetch arms to conquer; absolutely conquer, the allurements of the world, the sollicitations of the flesh, and the temptations of the devil. — By this, a way is opened for us unto the holy of holies; and what may we not venture to ask, what may we not venture to receive, who have the blood of the everlasting covenant to plead, in all our approaches to the throne of grace? — Having, therefore, such an High-priest; having in his cross, unsearchable riches; Who shall make our glorying void? What shall hinder us from rejoicing? and saying, “Blessed be God, for these opening beauties of spring! Blessed be God, for the expected fruits of autumn! Blessed be God, for ten thousand thousand gifts of his indulgent providence! But, *above all*, Blessed be God, for the cross of Christ!”

As ministers of the gospel, we are not left to set before our hearers, a system of refined Heathenism; or to entertain them with cold, spiritless lectures of virtue. No; we have the infinitely tender love, the immensely free grace, of the bleeding, dying Immanuel, to display—to improve—to enforce. And is there a topic in the whole compass of oratory; is there an argument, amidst all the stores of reason, so admirably calculated to touch the finest movements of the soul? To strike all the inmost springs of action, with the most persuasive, the most commending energy?—Would we alarm the *supine*, or intimidate the *presumptuous*? We may call them to behold God's own Son, weltering in blood; God's own Son, transfixed with the arrows of justice. We may bid them consider, if judgment begins with the immaculate Mediator, where shall the irreclaimable sinner appear? How will he escape the stroke, how bear the weight, of God's everlasting vengeance?—Would we comfort the distressed? We may point them to an atonement, whose merits are infinite, and able to save to the very uttermost, *Heb. vii. 25.* We may lead them to a righteousness, whose efficacy is unbounded, and sufficient to justify the ungodly. And what balm can be so sovereign, for a wounded conscience?—Are we to support the weak, and animate the doubting? Here, we may shew them promises; free promises †; exceeding great and precious promises; ratified by the oath of Jehovah, and sealed by the blood of his Son. And what cordials can be so restorative, to the drooping Christian?

In

† To man the bleeding cross has promised all:
 The bleeding cross has sworn eternal grace:
 Who gave his life, what grace will he deny?

In short; the doctrine of the cross, is suited to answer all the great ends of our ministry, and promote all the truly valuable interests of our people. By this, the holy Spirit delights to work. And this, O Satan, *shall be thy plague*: This O sin, *shall be thy destruction*, Hof. xiii. 14.—However, therefore, the cross might be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; God forbid, that *we* should glory in any thing else!—Let this be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending*, of all our public ministrations.—Let us leave a favour of this knowledge, which is far better than precious ointment, in every private company.—Let it appear, from *all* our conversation; That the affections of our heart, and the labours of our life, are devoted, wholly devoted, to our adored Redeemer's cross.—*Happy* the people, who are under the care of such ministers! and *blessed* the ministers, who walk according to this rule.

II. Let me exhort all true believers. Those who are vile in their own eyes, and to whom Christ alone is precious.—Remember, brethren, what is written in the Prophet: It is a description of your state: It is a direction for your conduct. *In the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall all the seed of Israel*.

* The Author, who could write the spirited and weighty lines which follow, must doubtless have this conviction deep on his heart:

—————Thou, my All!

My theme! my inspiration! and my crown!
 My strength in age! my rise in low estate!
 My soul's ambition, pleasure, wealth!—my world!
 My light in darkness! and my life in death!
 My boast through time! bliss through eternity!
 My sacrifice! my God! What things are these!

Night Thoughts, N. 4.

rael be justified, and in him shall they glory, Isa. xlv.

25.

Let none say, that religion is a gloomy or uncomfortable state: I call upon you, this day to rejoice.—Let none say, that religion is a mean or despicable thing: I call upon you, this day, to glory. And have the divine authority for both.—You will dishonour the blessed Jesus; you will disparage his surpassing excellency; if you do not confide in him, and make your boast of him.—Christ is King of heaven; Christ is judge of the world; Christ is God over all. And of such a Saviour shall we not glory? Yes, verily: And in all circumstances, and on every occasion.

Amidst your manifold infirmities, glory in Christ. For, though he was crucified in weakness, he hath all power in heaven and earth. And it is written before him; it is one of his immutable decrees; *Sin shall not have dominion over you*, Rom. vi. 14.—

Amidst your various failings, glory in Christ. For, his righteousness covers all your imperfections; his righteousness secures you from wrath and condemnation: and, though deficient in yourselves, you are complete in him, *Col. ii. 10.*—Under the pressure of tribulations, lift up your heads, and glory in the cross. Because the captain of your Salvation, was made perfect through sufferings. If you suffer with him, you shall also reign with him. And the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the happiness, which Christ has purchased with his agonies, and will quickly bestow on his people.—When death approaches; death, that cuts off the Spirit of Princes, and is terrible among the Kings of the earth; do you still glory in the cross. Adhering to this banner, you may boldly say; *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55. When that great, tremendous
day

day shall come, which puts an end to time and terrestrial things; when that awful, that majestic voice, is heard, which commands all the race of Adam to appear at the bar; *then*, my dear brethren in Christ, *then* also shall you glory in the cross. When others, in an agony of terror, call upon the rocks to fall on them, and mountains to overwhelm them; This shall be your sedate appeal; rather this shall be your heroic challenge: *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died;* Rom. viii. 33, 34.—Then shall you enter the harbour of eternal rest; not like a shipwreck'd mariner, cleaving to some broken plank, and hardly escaping the raging waves; but like some stately vessel, with all her sails expanded, and riding before a prosperous gale †.

III. Let me caution the *self-righteous*. Those, who more frequently think of their own piety than of Christ's obedience; are more apt to cry out with the Pharisee, *I am no extortioner, no adulterer;* than to confess with the publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner.*—What shall I say to these persons? Let me not be thought censorious, when my only aim is to be faithful. Beware, I beseech you beware, lest you build for eternity, not on a *rock*, but on the *sand*. However you may appear in your own sight; before the adorable majesty of the everlasting God, before the consummate perfection of his holy law, you are less than nothing; you are worse than nothing. You are, indeed you are, deficiency and sin. Renounce, therefore, renounce all dependence

† A ship waisted into the port, under the full influence of wind and tide, seems to afford the finest representation of a large, a rich, an abundant entrance; 2 Pet. i. 11.

dence on self. Trust no longer in a refuge of lies: Lest all your admired attainments, at the day of final retribution, be like straw, and hay, and stubble in Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace.—Imitate the blessed penman of my text. Are you blameless in your external carriage? So was he. Are you exemplary in many points? So was he. Yet all this righteousness he accounted but dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, Phil. iii. 8.—Be this your pattern. Write *emptiness* upon your own duties; *emptiness* upon your own works; and you shall be filled with all the fulness of God your Saviour. Every other cause of glorying will be like the morning cloud, or the early dew which passeth away, *Hos. vi. 5.* But this cause of glorying, will stand fast for evermore as the moon, and as the faithful witness in heaven, *Psal. lxxxix. 36.*

Can I conclude, without adding a word of admonition to the wicked? Those I mean, who are enemies to the cross of Christ; who mind earthly things; but neither hunger nor thirst after righteousness.—My soul remembers the wormwood and the gall of such a state; and cannot but tenderly pity these unhappy people.—Alas! my friends, what have you to glory in? The devil and his angels expect, ere long, to glory in your destruction. Those malignant fiends are eying you, as their prey, and are impatient to begin your torment. Great inexpressibly great, is your danger. The Lord Almighty open your eyes to discern it?—Nevertheless your case is not desperate. You may yet be delivered, *as a bird out of the snare of the fowler.* Look unto the crucified Jesus. *Why* does he hang on that bloody tree? *Why* are his hands pierced with iron? *Why* is his body racked with pain? *Why* his heart torn with anguish; It is for you, sinners for you.
That

That blood is poured out, to cleanse *you* from guilt. Those wounds are sustained, to heal *your* consciences. That anguish is endured, to obtain rest for *your* souls.—In that mangled body *dwells all the fulness of the Godhead*, Col. ii. 9. Great, beyond imagination great, is the merit of those sufferings. Why then, O! why will you die? Why will you perish for ever; who have an all-sufficient propitiation in the cross of Christ? Fly to this sanctuary. Fly, before it be too late. Fly without a moment's delay. 'Tis an inviolable sanctuary. None ever perished, that fled by faith to the compassionate, the divinely compassionate Redeemer.—His death shall be a full satisfaction for your iniquities. A sense of his immensely rich goodness shall win your affections; shall incline (what all the threatnings of damnation could never effect), shall incline you, to lothe your sins, and to love his service; shall smooth your path, and expedite your progress, to the regions of immortal honour and joy.

Having now, with great plainness of speech, addressed my *brethren* in the ministry; having exhorted *believers*: cautioned the *self-righteous*; and warned the *wicked*: let me commend the whole to your serious recollection, and to God's gracious benediction.—And, “O Lord most holy! O God most mighty! O holy and merciful Saviour! “by thine agony and bloody sweat—by thy cross “and passion”—let not the word, now spoken, be in vain in the Lord! *Amen*, and *Amen*.”

F I N I S.

