

TWO
SERMONS,
DELIVERED
AT EPSOM, NEW HAMPSHIRE
ON THE DAY APPOINTED
FOR THE ANNUAL STATE FAST,
AND
NATIONAL THANKSGIVING
FOR PEACE,
APRIL 13, 1815

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Forenoon Sermon

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ISAIAH LVIII. 6.

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the band of wickedness?

HERE is presented a description of sincere, acceptable, and profitable fasting. In verses preceding the text, the prophet deals in severe reproof with those, who fasted only in an outward, vain, and hypocritical manner. He would teach the people, that merely a formal observance of a day of fasting would neither please the Lord, nor profit themselves. It is evident from the manner of the prophet's reproof, that those, whom he was particularly addressing, were scrupulously exact in observing all the offensive forms of fasting and penitence, while their hearts remained unaffected by all their services. "Behold," says he, "ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high." That is, Do not vainly imagine, that, without sincerity, the most boisterous sound of words will gain the ear of the holy and omniscient Majesty of heaven. He cannot be deceived. He is perfectly acquainted with every secret desire of the soul. His attention can never be attracted by an empty sound from a thoughtless tongue. He will hear the prayer only of the contrite and humble spirit. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul?" Is it a day for a man superstitiously to bring pain upon his body? or

to feel a sorrow merely because he is exposed to punishment, and not primarily because he is a sinful creature? “Is it to bow down his head as bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?” Is it a day on which to pay a sanctimonious observance to merely outward ceremonies? “Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?” Then follows the text, which particularly describes in its connection to true design of acceptable fasting. “Is not this the fast I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou feest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

The meaning of the phrase, “To loose the bands of wickedness,” is very evidently the same, as confessing and forsaking sin. This meaning is presented in the text with sufficient clearness without a more particular comment.

Such then appears to be the connection of the words selected, and such their meaning. They seem evidently suited to lead us to a more extensive consideration of the object of genuine, profitable fasting.

In order to derive the greatest profit from the general doctrine of the text by viewing it in as clear light as possible, let it receive our attention under the two following divisions.

- I. AVAILABLE FASTING IMPLIES THE CONFESSION AND REJECTION OF SIN;
AND,
- II. SUCH IS THE FASTING, THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN; OR SUCH AS WILL BE
ACCEPTABLE TO HIM.

I. AVAILABLE FASTING IMPOKES THE CONFESSION AND REJECTION OF SIN.

If we desire to fast in a manner, which will be acceptable to God and profitable to ourselves, we should be careful to distinguish between that fasting, which the word properly signifies, viz., merely an abstinence from food, and those penitent exercises of the soul, which should always be kept in view as the principle object. Too much caution can hardly be used, lest we vainly imagine, that, by ceasing from labor and abstaining from food, we do all, which the design of a day of fasting requires. But doing no more than this is doing nothing to any good purpose. All this we might observe, and still be fit subjects of the ancient reproof, “Ye shall not fast as ye do this day.”

In pursuing the general design proposed, let our attention be directed,

1. To the importance of the CONFESSION of sin.

In order to observe that spiritual fasting, which alone can honor God or profit men, sin must be penitently confessed before Him, who alone has power to grant forgiveness.

But how shall we properly confess our sins before the Lord, unless we feel our criminality? Without this, it cannot be done. Neither offences against God nor man will be confessed, while their author feels no consciousness of blame. Suppose a man to have injured his neighbor in some manner, and in a manner very manifest to all but himself; and still, if he himself remain confident that he has not injured his neighbor indeed, nor even in thought, he feels himself but poorly fitted to acknowledge faults, ask forgiveness, and make satisfaction. This he cannot be expected to do. Neither will any one be led to the confession of sins to Him, against whom all sin is committed, unless he have a consciousness of having committed sins;- unless he have a sense of guilt. Mankind are much too little prone to make an ingenuous confession of their faults, when they see them; and much less disposed are they to confess faults, whose existence they deny. In approaching God then in order to confess our sins, the first step must be taken with a realizing sense of criminality. There are doubtless many, who do not view their own hearts as awfully polluted with sin. Many appear not to feel the

force of the sacred truth, that “the heart.” The unsanctified heart, “is desperately wicked.” Nor do many realize, that it “it is deceitful above all things,” and inclined to conceal its wickedness from its own view;- inclined to deceive both itself and others. And particularly are these remarks applicable to many, whose manner of life, in the view of men, has been unexceptionable. Many, because they have been upright and honorable in their transactions with their fellow-men, and have maintained the character of good citizens,- are too apt to imagine, that they have, therefore, been just in their conduct towards the Almighty, and, that he views them as blameless characters. Too often is it the case, that mankind fancy the Almighty to be altogether such an one as themselves; that, like themselves, he determines the character from outward appearances. But it should be ever remembered, that, while “man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart.” He judges from the secret feelings of the soul;- feelings unknown to all but Omniscience himself. But, if any are desirous of feeling the true state of their hearts, no method will be so effectual, as comparing their feelings with the equitable, the perfect law of God. It is by this law, that sin is made to appear “exceeding sinful.” By comparing ourselves by the divine requirements, all of which are perfectly reasonable, we may at once see how far short we have fallen of rendering them their due obedience. The hold law commands us to love the Lord with all our heart. This reasonable command, we should remember, “is exceedingly broad.” It requires us continually to regard Jehovah with the purest and highest love;- to esteem him far above all created good. While considering the extent of this requirement, it becomes to us to inquire of ourselves, whether we have not, in many instances, violated some other of the divine commands beside the first. For, if any other command has been broken, it is a certain evidence, that the first has not been observed according to its true meaning. To love God with all the heart requires our highest regard for his character during the whole period of our existence. If, therefore, any one of the commands of God is violated, it shows at-once, that guilt is likewise incurred from a breach of the first and great command. For it is impossible, that God should be regarded with feelings of holy love, and, at the same time, that any of his commands, by the same person, should be violated. The supposition prevents a gross absurdity. – By the strict and holy law of God, let our characters be compared. And, on this day, set apart by public authority agreeably to the highly proper custom of our pious ancestors “for public fasting, humiliation, and prayer,” let us all endeavor to feel interested in the design of the day. Let us diligently and prayerfully examine our past lives, and especially during the last year; and be willing to see without disguise the true, though frightful catalogue of our sins. Let us not shrink from the inquiry, however painful; for now is the time to profit from it. God most certainly views our hearts as they are, whether we are willing thus to view them or not. Let the life be carefully examined, and compared with that perfect law, which we have been considering. This is the only true method, by which to determine the weight of guilt impending over every offender against God. – Let each one inquire thus of himself. In the first place, have I ever loved God with all my heart? Have I been invariably actuated during my whole life by a regard for his glory? For, if this has not been the case, I have fallen criminally short of my duty. Every one is certainly accountable for the influence, which he bears in society. And has all my influence, whether small or great, been devoted to God? Has it been employed in a manner, and in the best manner possible for me to use it, to increase the prosperity of religion? Might I have made any more exertions, the probably consequence of which would have been the increase of the interest of the Redeemer in the world? Have I invariably maintained such conduct towards my fellow-men, as, upon rational and Christian principles, I ought to expect from them? In a word, have I invariably obeyed all the divine commands? – Where is the individual, who dares affirm, all this I have done? It is presumed, such as one cannot be found. Great then is the weight of guilt hanging on every soul. – But inquiry should not stop here. Mankind are naturally disposed not merely to neglect those things, which they ought to do; but to do those things, which they ought not. And, on this side,

let the inquiry be extended. Have I never, in any manner, cherished an evil disposition towards any of my fellow-creatures? Further than this, - have I never *actually injured* any one by slander, by fraud, by theft, or in some other manner? Have I never perverted the object of my existence by intemperance? Have I never spoken lightly or contemptuously of the sacred truths of the Bible, or of the cause of religion? Have I never, in any manner, profaned the holy Sabbath of rest? Have I never thoughtlessly and blasphemously used the name of the holy God of heaven? — Will not faithful conscience constrain many to acknowledge, that some, or all these sins are theirs? But, on this point, why need I dwell?

Can the person be found, who, after faithfully searching his own heart and comparing it with the Word of unerring truth, would not acknowledge himself a great sinner? Reflection, it would seem, could hardly fail to lead every one to feel the grievous weight of guilt hanging upon his own soul, and for which he must answer before the Judge of all the earth. Where can the person be found, who is not guilty to a great degree of the sin of ingratitude? Who can enumerate the favors of an indulgent Providence, of which he is made the constant partaker? How criminally short of duty do the most pious fall in often forgetting the kind hand, which leads and sustains them! The blessings of Heaven flow on every side. Often we receive them in an unexpected and surprising manner. But O, how seldom do they cause due gratitude to the Giver! Who can say, that he has not been very criminally ungrateful for the many good things, which God has kindly bestowed? Whose gratitude has arisen equal to the favors, which God has granted individuals, communities, our country, and the world? Who is not guilty of long abusing the mercy of God? even the mercy presented by the condescending overtures of the Gospel? And are there not many, who even now, after so long a time, are refusing to hear the voice of mercy, and are continuing to harden their hearts? — But perhaps enough has been said upon the numerous ways, in which sin may be incurred. Could we see our hearts as they are, how contaminated with sin must they appear!

But it is by no means sufficient, that the understanding be convinced of the sinfulness of the heart. A person may be constrained to acknowledge himself a great sinner without being at all affected with his situation; - without feeling the least degree of penitence. This leads me to observe, that, in order for a person rightly to confess his sins before an offended God, he must feel sorrowful, humble, penitent in view of them. And the sole ground of his sorrow should be, not because he has exposed himself to misery; but because he has disobeyed and offended a holy God; - because he has done evil. A soul with these views of sin is then prepared to approach the mercy-seat with a confession of sincerity, and thankfully to receive forgiveness. Only the soul, that sees the odious nature of sin, exercises an abhorrence towards it, and feels its burden, is prepared to make such a confession before the Lord, as he will be pleased in mercy to hear.

That it is our duty humbly and penitently to confess our sins before the Lord, we are frequently taught in the Scriptures. This is inculcated by Joshua's direction to Achan. "Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him." The Israelites are thus exhorted. "Now, therefore, make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers." In another place, the declaration of the Almighty is, "I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face." We are presented in the Scriptures with many examples of the confession of both private and public sins. "How many," saith Job, "are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin." Again, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." The Psalmist of Israel says, "I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin." Again, "I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." — Many are also the examples of the confession of public sins. The pious Ezra, in prayer, confesses the sin of his people.

“O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.” Of the propriety and importance of confessing public sins is fasting, Nehemiah has given us an impressive example. Hear his own account of his conduct, after he was informed of the affliction and reproach of his people and the ruin of the beautiful city of Jerusalem. “And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him, and observe his commandments; let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commanded thy servant Moses.”

But not only does true fasting imply the *confession* of sin; but,

2. *The REJECTION or FORSAKING of it.*

It is impossible, that a person should penitently confess his sins before God, that is, with a temper abhorrent from sin, and, that sin, at the same time, should be his delight. The forsaking of sin is therefore necessarily connected with a penitent, a cordial confession of it. Renouncing sin merely because it is wrong, or out of true love and obedience to God, is one of the surest evidences, that the heart has been prepared sincerely and penitently to confess it. That forsaking sin should ever be connected with the main design of fasting is evident as well from reason, as from Revelation. Reason plainly teaches us, that wickedness should be forsaken in order to expect forgiveness for the commission of it. For how is it possible, that the heart should be displeased and disgusted with any object; and, at the same time, cherish and pursue that object? It cannot be possible. The supposition is contrary to the nature of man. That only the kind of fasting, which implies forsaking sin, will be acceptable to God or profitable to men, is evident from the obvious meaning of the text. “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness?” From the text and its connection, it is evident, that forsaking sin generally, and particularly the sin of oppression, is the most prominent feature in the requirement. Often, in the Scriptures, is the rejection of forsaking of sin inculcated. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” “Forsake the foolish.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord.”

We are now prepared to show,

II. THAT SUCH IS THE FASTING, THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN; OR SUCH, AS WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO HIM.

This is plain doctrine from the text. And elsewhere God has made many and gracious promises to a penitent confession of sin. “If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only, he will deliver you. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up. Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you. Thus saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord, your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Who confesseth and forsaketh them [his sins] shall have mercy.” Speaking of rebellious Israel, the Lord has made the following merciful and encouraging promise. “If they shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed

against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; — if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.” To such spiritual fasting, or true penitence as we have already described, God surely would never have made such promises of favor as he has made, were it not acceptable to him. — Thus does it appear, that available fasting implies the confession and rejection of sin; and, that such fasting is acceptable to God. And, as no other kind of fasting is any where authorized, we may justly conclude, that this is the *only* kind of fasting, which he will accept. In closing this subject, let me, my hearers, most earnestly entreat you to not consider interested in this subject but yourselves. Make individually the most candid examination of your own hearts. Strive to view them, as they are viewed by an omniscient God. See if you find not entwined around them the bands of wicked thoughts. Nay, see if they are not bound in sins, that meet the public eye. It well becomes Christians, while they remember, that “there is no man that liveth and sinneth not,” still to aim at entire freedom from the bands of wickedness. Well may they mourn, if ever they are bound for a moment to any forbidden object. — But are there not many, who have never yet been freed from complete confinement under the bonds of iniquity? Do any feel, that they have never known the enjoyment of the glorious liberty of the sons of God? Do any feel their guilt to be a heavy burden? Then, where is it realized that sin has thus abounded, let true repentance, faith, and love, the surest marks of purifying grace, equally abound. Take with you words; and let your constant and fervent supplication be, “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive.”

Afternoon Sermon

ISAIAH XLV.7.

I make Peace.

WERE Christian nations, after receiving any remarkable favor, to disregard the hand of God; pious heathen, for we hope there are such, would rise in judgment against them. The great body of the pagan world have never been persuaded, that the wisest and best human exertions could not alone ensure prosperity. They have ever felt their dependence upon something; but, upon what, they often found a difficulty in explaining. The most learned and rational of the heathen world, however, have generally supposed their dependence to be upon some being or beings of wisdom and power superior to man. The ancient Greeks and Romans, probably the most learned heathen nations, that ever existed, believed in the existence of a family of deities; and a family much more extensive too, than is manifested in the creed of any modern devines. They supposed, that different parts of the world and the various employments of men had each its superintending deity. They likewise supposed, that all these were dependent deities, and all subject to one, who was supreme, and whom the Romans denominated Jupiter. But we have reason to suppose it their general belief, that even Jupiter himself was not perfectly independent; but frequently under the control of what they termed the fates; probably understanding about the same by their term, as we do my the more familiar word chance. A description of all the characters, offices and relationship of their deities, and the absurdities thence arising, would furnish the contents for many volumes. But not withstanding all the absurdities and delusions of pagan nations; still accounts of their grateful sense of favors and apparent piety — often cast reproach on conduct of nations, who glory in religion of a more consistent form and purer tendency. Seldom would they undertake any important enterprise without imploring the aid of some

deity. And seldom did they experience any remarkable interposition in their favor – without acknowledging their obligations and manifesting their gratitude to some superior power. Many instances occur, which prove their belief of some kind of a divine control over the affairs of men, and evince their grateful sense of favors. Let one among many be given. – At a time, when the learned Cicero was consul in the Roman republic, we are informed, that an extensive conspiracy was planned, the object of which was first to take the life of Cicero and of other distinguished characters; to fire the city of Rome; and then seize on the government. Only on the evening before the time appointed for its execution, the whole conspiracy was disclosed to Cicero through the information of a private individual, who happened to gain knowledge of it. Upon receiving intelligence of the contemplated design, Cicero immediately adopted such efficient measures to guard himself and the city, that the conspirators feared to commence their bloody work. The whole design proved abortive, and the city was saved. Now observe the conduct of Cicero, who had nothing but the light nature from which to learn his religion. Though he had himself displayed great wisdom in his precautionary and defensive arrangements; and though love of applause was perhaps his greatest failing; - yet he appears convinced, that the preservation of the city depended on something deeply concealed from human foresight. He immediately assembles the officers of government, and, after describing in a moving and eloquent style the imminent danger, to which themselves, their friends, and the city, had been exposed, and also the means employed for the public safety; — he very earnestly recommends a public decree of thanksgiving to Jupiter for the remarkable preservation. Such a decree was accordingly passed, a careful observance of which he enjoins on the people universally. – And, if a signal preservation of the Almighty among pagans could excite their thankfulness to their imaginary benefactor, - to a senseless image; - shall we, after receiving by the interposition of that same Almighty Being so great a favor as peace with our enemies, and when, by light from Heaven, we may read our obligations to this Being; — shall we neglect to raise to him the warmest gratitude of our hearts? *Should* we neglect to do this, pagan nations not only; but the brutal world, and even inanimate creation would cry out against us in the bitterest reproaches. For even the ox knows his owner, and, if not reacted with the cruelty of some matters, will dumbly mean his gratitude for kindness. And can man, who calls his own rank among other beings exalted, forget thankfully to acknowledge the daily blessings, and especially the signal blessings, which he receives from his Benefactor, his Preserver, his Creator” –Were goodness necessarily connected with high rank and exalted abilities, this could not be the case. Were man disposed to act a part becoming the eminence, on which he stands, he could not refrain from manifesting his gratitude, his reverence and love to the great Fountain of every good.

In the highest degree proper then is it, when the welcome sound of peace is again heard in our land, that we should unitedly, publicly, and sincerely express our highest gratitude to that God, who has directed this event. For God has expressly informed us in the text, that he does make peace.

The words, selected for the direction of our thoughts, seem adapted to lead us to inquire, I- IN WHAT MANNER GOD COUSES PEACE BETEEN NATIONS; WHICH WILL NATURALLY LEAD US,
II- TO AN ENUMERATION OF THE GREAT ADVANTAGES OF THE RETURN OF PEACE;
AND
III- TO CONSIDER THEM AN ABUNDANT CAUSE OF THANKSGIVING TO GOD.

I. IN WHAT MANNER DOES GOD CAUSE PEACE BETWEEN NATIONS?

He caused peace by giving a pacific disposition to those, who direct the public affairs of the nations contending. That God does direct the hearts of men is one of the plainest doctrines of the Bible. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will." To the same effect it is said, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." These preparations of the heart to suit his life designs he causes through the instrumentality of motives. The truth of this assertion is too evident from both reason and Revelation to need at this time particular proof. When two nations have commenced hostilities, if God should view them ripe for destruction, he might with the greatest ease so balance their strength, their successes, and their interest, and, in this manner, so continue their hostile disposition, that they would not leave the contest, till both were destroyed. But, when he sees some greater good in view by sparing them still longer, he so orders events in his providence, that the contending nations find their interest in being reconciled to each other. We can easily conceive, that a single victory on one side, and the consequent defeat on the other— might so operate on both sides as to be a sufficient motive for the cessation of hostilities, and an amicable settlement of every subject of contention. And, in methods innumerable, and often unseen by mortals, by presenting sufficient motives in the arrangement of his providence, God often composes enraged and contending nations to peace. Thus is he always the real, primary cause, whenever peace is established.

We are now led,

II. TO AN ENUMERATION OF THE GREATEST ADVANTAGES OF THE RETURN OF PEACE. AND,

1. Peace announces the cessation of a great loss and expense of property, which are always, to a greater or less degree, the consequence of a state of war.

So long as our country continues its extensive commercial pursuits, whenever it is engaged in a war, which endangers the immense property spread in times of peace over every sea and ocean, severe losses both public and private must inevitably follow. Much must also be lost through the want of employment for the mariner; much is the price of articles for exportation; and much in the decay of the vessels designed to convey them. In other ways too numerous to be mentioned, must losses be experienced in time of war.

No war can be maintained for any considerable length of time, unless by remarkably prudent economy, without incurring an enormous expense. Armies and navies must be supported, and numerous measures of defense adopted. But peace brings with it the agreeable intelligence, that such severe losses may no longer be expected; that such extraordinary expenses are no longer necessary.

2. Peace announces the cessation of the extraordinary work of death, which is the invariable consequence of a state of war.

During a state of hostilities, great is the exposure of the health and the life. Sickness in the camp and the sword on the field vie with each other in the work of death. How destructive the soldier's diet and habits are to the health of those, unaccustomed to a military life, experience has but too sadly proved. By indolence at one time, and excessive fatigue at another; by the want of proper clothing and shelter from a northern atmosphere; by increased vice at home, and crowded, noisome prisons abroad; by other means arising from a state of war, too numerous indeed to be distinctly mentioned,

are thousands suddenly called from life. Many lives, and often lives valuable to society, and perhaps none without a mourner, must be ultimately ended. The brave and valuable are often the most exposed, and many losses of this kind, in a time of hostilities, a country must expect to sustain. Hundreds, in one fatal hour, are often hurried thoughtless and unprepared into the eternal world. A solemn reflection to a pious mind! But peace gives us the joyful information, that such scenes of untimely death are ended. –And this leads me to observe again,

3. That the arrival of peace removes from many a breast much painful anxiety.

In many part of our country, during the late war, and especially in sea-ports, painful indeed must have been the anxiety of thousands for the safety of their property and their persons. Frequent and distressing was the alarm excited in many places. Many were long compelled to consider the question a doubtful one, whether another rising sun would discover their property in ruins, and themselves in the hands of an enemy. Such a state must be one of very painful anxiety.

Think how many thousands are required to compose an army, or the armies of two contending nations, and are subjected to the exposure of the dangers of war. And then think how many more thousands, though not exposed to immediate danger themselves, are at home full of painful anxiety for the safety of their absent friends. The sound of every distant cannon pierces some tender mother's heart; and perhaps a messenger must soon inform her, that the father too was in the battle, - fought bravely, - but was not made prisoner. How many anxiously watch every passing mail, every travelling stranger, to learn, whether a father, a brother, a son, a husband – are prisoners in a distant land, among the slain, or still alive with friends. During a period of war, how many, wakeful at the silent, midnight hour, view by imagination some absent relative performing the sentinel's duty with only an inclement sky for his covering; and perhaps too, cautiously picking his way among the dead around him! Scenes like these are only the common scenes of war. And, when any have absent friends thus exposed, so long as humanity remains the same, they cannot refrain from anxiety. Painful is the anxiety endured for the return of friends, who have long been exposed to the dangers of war. How anxious to see, whether they return with all their limbs, or have left a part in a distant land. How anxious to know, whether severe wounds have impaired their reason! But many must wait the return of friends in vain. Many can never enjoy the painful satisfaction of viewing the earth, that covers their lifeless clay. But the return of peace removes all that painful anxiety, which a state of war unavoidably excites.

4. The return of peace presents our country with an opportunity of resuming numerous employments, which produce individual and national wealth and happiness.

Numerous mechanical arts, peace will again bring into exercise. The ship-builder may again prepare his tools; the sailor swing his pack and make for the water; the merchant brush his shelves, and expect some gain with every eastern breeze. Many productions of our fertile soil, which have long remained inactive in the storehouse, will now solicit many hands *that* to distribute them to the nations of the worldly. Soon shall the trade winds again be wafting onward some American merchandise; and soon shall every transient breeze fill some American sail. Again may the millions of China be greatly assisted in the support of life by our receiving their productions; and again may the American farmer feed the hungry European mechanic, and perhaps be well paid for his kindness. Other useful and profitable employments too numerous to be distinctly mentioned will again present themselves to the hands of the laborer.

5. Peace will have a tendency to diminish the prevalence of vice and immortality.

The camp is always proverbial for wickedness of almost every description. And the greater the number there taught the principles of vice, and the longer they there remain, the more extensive and pernicious will be their example. In an army, where few restraints are imposed; where much leisure is afforded; and where are collected many characters of the vilest stamp; schemes of wickedness are matured, and carried to such an alarming degree, as to bear away all the bounds of morality, and even of common decency. If man is naturally inclined to evil, as the Scriptures teach, and experience and observation prove; what situation could be more destructive to the morals and happiness of all, and especially of volatile youth, than a familiar acquaintance with such examples? But the celebration of hostilities removes many a giddy youth from such destructive scenes, and restores him to the salutary innocence of more virtuous society. Thousands will the return of peace doubtless rescue from the snares of satan and the gulf of ruin.

6. Peace presents the prospect of the advancement of morality and religion.

It gives thousands, who had long been deprived of the privilege, an opportunity of reading the Scriptures, where they can do it without disgrace and insult; of regularly attending the public worship of God, and the ordinances of religion. It recalls them from the school of vice, from the daily and destructive influence of bad examples to the society of those, by whom morality of conduct is more generally considered an excellence. —Many, who have been much embarrassed in their pecuniary circumstances, will now feel an ability more extensively to support the institutions, and aid the cause of religion. Much more abundant generally will be the means for promoting religion in our own, and in other countries. Many obstructions in the way of sending the Gospel to the destitute abroad, by the return of peace, will be removed. In ways too numerous to be distinctly mentioned, will the cause of Christianity receive additional strength. —And, as another happy consequence of the peace, may we not with much satisfaction likewise mention,

7. The probable moderation of that violent party spirit, which has so unhappily distracted our land?

Now peace is restored to Europe* and to this county, except the war against the piratical Algerines, in which we all agree, what can remain, and what shall be allowed, to interrupt our political harmony? In the general principles of our form of government all agree. Why then should animosities arise about particular favorite men? —We surely have great reason to believe, and it becomes us to indulge the belief with much satisfaction and thankfulness, that the present situation of our own country and of Europe will be instrumental of removing in a great measure those nominal political distinctions, which have heretofore created so much unhappiness. What is there in our future prospects, in which we may not be agreed? Why should the well disposed be let astray by the fictions of demagogues, and by a mere sound of words? Let not the knowledge of a man's political name be considered the only prerequisite in order to determine, whether he is qualified to hold a public office. For it is certain, that the general nominal distinctions used to designate the parties, that have existed, do not invariably mark the political creed of those, to whom they have been applied. On many subjects, there is a material difference, which facts have proved, in the sentiments of those considered of the same party. But always let the first inquiry respecting a candidate for public office be this: *Does his life prove, that he is actuated by the true principles of Christianity?* And then, *Does he possess other qualifications requisite for the office?* If piety and ability can be found united, and

we hope they can, no reason can be given, why these should *not* direct our public interests; but many can be given, why they *should*. If our happy Republic be destined to destruction, let it be destroyed by good men. But, under the direction of good men, it will endure the shock of ages without alarm or injury. For their sake it would be long spared.

(* Since the above was written, Bonaparte has again arrived in France, and warlike measures are in operation in many parts of Europe. Should a distressing war ensue, we have much reason to believe, that the time of its continuance will be short, and that Europe will soon again be blessed with a universal peace. But, whether a war be suffered long to distract the nations of Europe, or peace be soon established, why need we be poisoned with their politics? Why need we cross the Atlantic to destroy ourselves?)

But, if, upon certain subjects, there should still remain a difference in opinion, can any reason be given, why this difference should interrupt the friendship and happiness of society? Certainly none. It becomes us ever to remember, that others have the same right to their opinions as we have to ours. All have a civil right to believe what they please; but, when furnished with all necessary evidence, no moral right to believe anything but truth. But, for the abuse of the latter, we are not to account to civil authority, but to God, who judgeth the heart. Whenever politics is the subject of conversation, it is the duty of all ever to observe the same candor and moderation, which are necessary when conversing upon any of the other concerns of life. And to those, who desire to promote the peace and happiness of society, the observance of two, short, and simple rules, may not be altogether unprofitable. First, *Be sure never to advance anything for truth, which is not well known and established as such*; and secondly, *Make a law with yourselves never to suffer passion to rise in the least degree*. – But the mention of every advantage resulting from the return of peace need not be expected at the present time. What have been mentioned, if the most prominent and distinguished, it is hoped, will lead the mind to the rest.

It becomes the object of this day as well, as regard for the recommendation of the President, while we make the blessing of peace the burden of our song of praise, not to forget the former goodness of God towards our native land. – He guided and supported our fathers while seeking a retreat from oppression. He taught the forest and the most stubborn savage to bow before them. He enabled the country in the days of its youth to maintain the rights of men. He gave us a Washington, the defender of freedom, the philanthropist, the Christian, the boast of his country. It was from the great Fountain, that wisdom was received for the formation of a constitution of government, which, though doubtless imperfect, has long excited the envy and the admiration of the world. – In the late war, in which we have been engaged, he has remarkably preserved the lives of our citizens, and blessed their exertions in defending our territory, the precious inheritance from our fathers.

All these favors may well lead us to our

III. SUBJECT OF CONSIDERATION, *viz.* THAT THEY ARE AN ABUNDANT CAUSE OF THANKSGIVING TO GOD.

We have seen, that he is the Author of peace with all its attendant blessings. We have seen how great are the advantages attending the welcome return of peace. Many of these have been mentioned. And even for which *one* of them could we refrain to manifest to God our thankfulness? Who would not

consider it a benefit to have the great expenses cease, which arise from a state of war? Surely everyone must consider this alone as sufficient cause for unfeigned gratitude. –

It certainly becomes all to rejoice at any event, which has a tendency to moderate that excessive political zeal, which has produced so much evil in our country. –Great indeed will the favor be esteemed by our citizens universally, and especially by many destitute sufferers, that they are again permitted to resume their accustomed occupations. – That our nation is again free from the painful anxiety of war; that its dismal sound is no longer heard; that we are relieved from distressing fear for the safety of our persons, our property, our friends, and our country, is worthy of our grateful remembrance. – Most willing indeed should be our thank-offering, that God has been pleased, by the return of peace, to lengthen out the lives of many of our countrymen. And a greater, far greater cause of thanksgiving is it still, if, by this event, the prevalence of vice is diminished, and morality and religion increased. –If each of the favors mentioned is worthy to excite our sincere gratitude to him, who is the primary Author of peace; how great should be our tribute of thanksgiving to him for all these favors united? For all these unmerited blessings let us enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. O praise the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth forever. Bless the Lord, O our souls.