

S E R M O N XX.

AN INCITEMENT TO TRUST IN THE
LIVING GOD.

1 TIMOTHY, Chap. vi. Ver. 17.

The living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

THIS epistle was written with a peculiar view, and is of a peculiar contexture. It was indited from the Holy Spirit, written by the apostle Paul, when a prisoner for Christ at Rome, and directed to Timothy, his dearly beloved son in the faith, who was an evangelist, an extraordinary officer in the church of God in the apostolic day and age. The particular design of the Holy Spirit in it, is to give from Paul, as his amanuensis, directions how Timothy should behave himself in the house of God, which he styles *the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*. He enumerates a most glorious set of gospel truths and principles, saying, *And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles,*

believed on in the world, received up into glory. A particular mention is made, and a perfect account given of the offices and officers which Christ appointed in his house, the church, and the particular graces and qualifications of each and every officer in it. In the first chapter, the apostle celebrates the praise of God for the high honour he had conferred on him, by putting him into, and calling him to exercise the office of apostleship; and thanks the Lord for this grace, almost as much as for his own salvation. In the chapter from whence my text is taken, he exhorts to the exercise, practice, and discharge of fundry duties, all which are enforced from motives truly spiritual, experimental, and evangelical. He exhorts to contentment, and argues for it, from the gain of it along with godliness, and from the consideration of what men are when they come into the world, and what they will be when they go out of it. He speaks of *the love of money*, or the sin of covetousness, as *the root of all evil*, an enemy to true religion and godliness, and the cause of ruin and destruction. He would have Timothy avoid every thing of this kind, to fight the good fight of faith, and gives him a solemn charge before God and Christ, that he would observe what had been commanded him, in the most impartial and perfect manner, until the appearing of Christ. He would that Timothy should charge the rich members of the church not to be elated with their riches, nor trust in them, since they are uncertain things; but in God, from whom they have received such a plentiful measure of them. *Charge them that are rich in*

this world, who have health, wealth, and abundance of temporal good, *that they be not high minded*; which is too generally the case with such, they valuing and thinking too highly of themselves on account of their temporalities, supposing their knowledge, wisdom, and judgments more excellent than those of others: whereas this is not always the case. *Nor trust in uncertain riches*; not in them because of their uncertainty, for they sometimes fly away from such as have largely shared in the possession of them: but he would they should trust *in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*. These words are delivered to the evangelist, to be applied to such of God's people as have much of this world's good, to the end they might cease from dependence upon it, lay it out to the best of purposes for the interest of Christ, to relieve his poor, maintain his ministers, and serve them with it in their day and generation. I have at this time no concern but with the words which I have read for my text—*The living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*. They are a glorious encouragement to faith, every word in them serving to increase and strengthen it. He, in whom we are to trust, is God, *The living God*, the giver of all good, who giveth us all things; yea, *he giveth us richly all things to enjoy*. I will, with a view and design to edify and profit, divide my text thus:

First, consider this title and epithet, *The living God*.

Secondly, I will exhibit him to your view, as the author, giver, and bestower of all things.

Thirdly, will shew that *he giveth us richly*, or abundantly, *all things*. And,

Lastly, that *he giveth us richly all things to enjoy*.

I am first to consider this title and epithet, *The living God*, which may be, and is most justly applied to God essentially, and also to God as personally considered. JEHOVAH, as the essential and incomprehensible fountain of life, being, and existence, hath this title given him by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. x. ver. 10. *The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King*. Thus David, in the 18th Psalm, *The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock*. The word JEHOVAH, which we translate Lord, is expressive of the incommunicable nature of the Godhead, which exists by a necessity of nature, independent of all beings and things, JEHOVAH being the fountain of existence to all worlds, creatures, and things: *He is before all things, and by him all things consist*. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God*, says Moses in the 90th Psalm. God liveth in himself, and of himself, a life of infinite blessedness, of essential holiness, absolute and supreme sovereignty over all things, visible and invisible. He ever liveth. *I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever*. And *it is in him we live, and move, and have our being*. As each of the divine persons in the incomprehensible Godhead, is God and Lord, and is so called in the infallible word; so the title, *The living God*, belongs to each of them, personally considered, as they coexist by essential union in the one incompre-

hensible nature or essence. Thus the title, *The living God*, is given to JEHOVAH, the Father. Peter saith unto Jesus, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God*, Matt. xvi. 16. Our Lord Jesus has this title given to him in the 3d chapter of the Hebrews, *The living God. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* By our examination of the context, it will be found that Christ is *The living God*, whom they are exhorted not to depart from. And the Holy Spirit is styled, *The Spirit of the living God*, which is equivalent to calling him *The living God*. The title, *living God*, leads us to consider that God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one true and *living God*, hath life in himself, originally, independently, essentially; that raising creatures out of nothing into a state of being and existence, giving them life, bestowing and imparting good unto them, are all owing to the good pleasure of JEHOVAH's will. *Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* Creation is the fruit of sovereignty, an act of almighty power; infinite wisdom likewise shines forth in it, and the goodness of God is manifested by it. All being is from God; all existence is in him; he made all things, and ordained all to their several ends: he disposes of all for his own glory, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. And as, from everlasting, he chose the persons of his people in Christ his Son, so he willed their being, and their utmost well-being; and formed all his counsels, purposes, and decrees concerning them, so as to do good unto them, and

bestow nothing but good upon them in time and eternity. Time, which is the measure of a creature's existence in this present state, is but a flux from the ocean of eternity; and when all things are accomplished for which the Lord gave birth to time, it will again be swallowed up in the abyss of eternity. What we call eternity, is a continued flux of time. an eternal succession, that must needs accompany creatures; for it is God only that gathers all time in one moment; and in his vast being encircles it, and contracts all to one centre and moment. When JEHOVAH stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth, he had his people and their good in view. He appointed the time of their continuance in this present state, the parents from whom they should receive, under him, their natural being, the places where they should be born, the places of their abode, and each and every particular which should befall them from their birth, in the whole course of their lives, and every circumstance which should lead on to, and issue in their death. And, *the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations. My counsel, saith he, shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* His eternity, immutability, and omniscience, as exercised and made manifest to his people in a covenant way, are supports to their faith. *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations,* says Moses, the man of God. Eternity and time, says one, differ as the sea and rivers; the sea never changes place, and is always one water; but the rivers glide along, and are swal-

lowed up in the sea; so is time in eternity. When we say God is eternal, we exclude from him all possibility of beginning and ending, all flux and change; as the essence of God cannot be bounded by any place, so it is not to be limited by any time: as it is his immensity to be every where, so it is his eternity to be always. As he doth necessarily exist, so he doth necessarily always exist. He knows all things by one intuitive comprehension, for his essence contains all perfections in itself; so his understanding comprehends all things past, present, and future. Hence, James says, *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* And he, as Creator, is the sovereign Lord of all things, and hath an unlimited dominion over all flesh. What he is in himself, and of himself, as made known in his works, revealed in his word, exhibited in his covenant, and declared in his exceeding great and precious promises, lays a foundation for our faith and hope in him. For the Eternal Three, before all worlds, entered into an everlasting covenant, and are bound by an everlasting word of promise, passed in that grand counsel and treaty, to save the elect in Christ with an everlasting salvation. It is one of God's high titles, that *He keepeth truth for ever. He will ever be mindful of his covenant*: he is therefore worthy of our highest confidence. We may well trust in him, *the living God*, who ever liveth to remember his people with everlasting kindness, to fulfil in them all the good pleasure of his will, to supply them with all necessary good, and to be to them a present help in every time

of trouble. Trust, says Paul, in *the living God*, for all things: for life, the continuance of it, for grace to improve it to his glory, to employ it in his service, and end it to his praise. He is the God of your life, the giver of it, the continuer of it. Natural, spiritual, and eternal life, are of him, and from him. Believers taught to know that their spiritual life is of God, and who experience the almighty power and grace of God in continuing, carrying on, and strengthening them with spiritual life in their souls, may well cry out with David, to the God of their praise, saying, *Which holdeth our soul in life*. Trust in health, wealth, present enjoyments, in self, friends, or any creature, is absolutely forbidden in the word. The Lord only is to be trusted in, and relied upon. *Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength. We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.* We are exhorted in the Scripture to trust in the Lord at all times, under all circumstances, and for every thing: and there is a variety of promises suited to our various cases, to encourage us to trust without doubt or wavering.

And this brings me, secondly, to exhibit *the living God* to your view, as the author, giver, and bestower of all good. God is a fountain, yea, he is an ever full and an ever flowing fountain of goodness to all his creatures. It is again and again affirmed of him in the word, that *the Lord is good*. Creation is an emanation of divine goodness: all was good at and by creation. God's ends, purposes, and designs, in form-

ing the heavens and the earth, the creatures in them and upon them, the special and peculiar ranks among which they were classed, and which they were to fill up, were all good, *And God saw every thing which he had made, and behold, it was very good.* There is nothing evil in the whole creation of God. It is sin that is the only evil, which is not of God, but arises from the mutability of the creature. Yet, we may safely say, God's decree concerning the permission of it, and the continuance of it in the moral world, and his predestination to damn some sinners eternally for it, are holy, just, and good. *The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.* The goodness of God is largely manifested in the covenant of grace, which is founded upon Christ, God's first elect; the promises of which express the love of God's heart, the bowels of his mercy, and his never failing compassion to his beloved children. In the 136th Psalm, David goes over all the works of God in nature, providence, and grace, and ascribes them one by one to the mercy of God. In it he praises JEHOVAH for that mercy which is over all his works of creation, providence, and redemption, and which is over his people to bless them for ever. The goodness of God is manifested in every providential event, and in the mysterious economy hereof; in giving food to all flesh, and in satisfying the desire of every living thing. Hence the Psalmist says, *The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.* But, in an especial manner, the peculiar care, goodness, and loving-kindness of God, are displayed towards

his beloved children. To them he is all goodness; and he every moment bestows some effects of it upon them, though they may overlook, and not perceive them. The everlasting, ever blessed, and eternal trinity, prevents believers with the blessings of goodness. The love of God, which is the fountain from whence all good flows, is a love which overflows all the sins, miseries, wants, and distresses of the children of the Most High. The salvation of Jesus contains all good in it, and is immutably the same. The Holy Ghost, as the spirit of grace and consolation, ever remains in, and abides with, the called people of God; and by his gracious inspiration and divine influence, he turns our sorrows into joy—our crosses and losses into real blessings. God gives himself to his people, and saith unto them, *I am the Lord thy God.* He who is God blessed for ever, God self-sufficient, and God all-sufficient, communicates himself in the gifts, fruits, and effects of his love, to his adopted children, whom he makes heirs of himself, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; and, as a fountain which can never be exhausted, he pours forth his grace, love, mercy, and goodness in the utmost expressions thereof; and all the mercies of his nature are expressed and manifested in the salvation of his Son, and by his covenant of free grace, which is made known in his written word, expressed in the declaration of his pardoning grace, confirmed by his immutable word of promise, and sealed by his inviolable oath; this gives us a view of his goodness, and by which we see that God, even our God, hath blessed, doth, and

will for ever bless us. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and he makes a plentiful communication of these blessings to us through the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit; who leads us to view the riches of grace, by opening to us the mines of goodness laid up for us in Christ our head, and which led the devout Psalmist to cry out, *O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them which fear thee.* God's blessing his people is a fatherly act, and proceeds from the good pleasure of his will, and is the fruit of the delight he taketh in, and the affection which he beareth towards them. God's blessing is expressed and explained thus: *For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous, with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield;* and whatsoever he gives his people, comes from his hearty good will towards, and good liking of them. It is the nature of goodness to be communicative; and God, who is the fountain and author of all good, delights in communicating his goodness to the elect sons of men. He is a sun of perpetual vigour, to enlighten and enliven the souls of his children, and a fountain and spring of never failing grace and consolation to them. His gifts are great, durable, and everlasting, *for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.* He gives his people being, and well-being. Their natural life is his gift, preserved by his power, and defended by his arm. Their spiritual life is from him, as the God of their mercies. And eternal life in heaven, where they will fully enjoy the utmost blessings of communion with the Eternal Three, is all of God alone. As we

view by faith the goodness of God in himself essentially, and him as giving and bestowing upon us all communicable good, we may well cry out, *O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard.* As God is the fountain of all good, so he is the giver and bestower of all good: and to see God in our mercies, to have a spiritual relish in them, and to improve them to his praise and glory, is our bounden duty and service. Which brings me,

Thirdly, to observe that he giveth us *richly*, or abundantly, all things. This will appear, as we consider there is nothing we can possibly want for soul or body, but the Lord hath provided it for, and bestowed it upon us. The body, as well as the soul, is the object and subject of God's everlasting love: the blood of Christ was shed for the redemption of it; and the whole person, soul, and body, is united to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the body, as well as the soul, will last throughout eternity. It is true, the body is subject to disease and liable to death, but it will be raised from it to die no more, and be endowed at the resurrection morn with such qualities as will fit it for the enjoyment of Christ's glorious presence in heaven for ever. *The body is for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.* The bodies therefore of the elect, in a way and manner inconceivable by us at present, will be qualified to take in glory, and receive infinite pleasure and joy from the glorified humanity of our Lord. But to pass from this to a subject more near and clear to our own case at present. We are still in this world,

and, as believers, are upon our passage through it to our heavenly home, the house eternal in the heavens. God hath begun to shew us his glory, and caused his goodness to pass before us. As spiritual persons, looking on you and addressing you as the children of the Most High, I may call upon you, as the Lord's witnesses, to give in your testimony to the truth before us. Hath not the Lord given, and doth he not continue to give us *richly*, or abundantly, all things? We are preserved to the present moment, are in the enjoyment of health, and most of us have a liberal supply of daily blessings, both for body and soul; so that it becomes us to say, *We will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with us.* It is well to enumerate and view over by reflection, the variety, multitude, and greatness of God's mercies to our individual persons. There is not a circumstance which befalls any of the children of God through life, but for some reason or other it is worth recording: for upon a survey of God's dealings with us, and our carriage towards him, we may, through the divine teachings of the Spirit, learn much of God's goodness, and of our own sin, guilt, and unworthiness. The parents from whom we immediately proceeded, the means and manner of our education, the course of life we followed before conversion, what methods the Lord used to renew and bring us to the true and saving knowledge of himself, what went before, and what followed after we were brought to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation, should be recollected by us to the praise and glory of the

Lord's name, grace, mercy, and faithfulness. It is good to view every dispensation of the Lord to us, as the fruit and effect of his covenant love. We are too prone to look upon temporal mercies as the fruit and effect of our own wisdom and industry, forgetting what the man of God hath said, *The Lord thy God: it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.* If we are afflicted, we are too apt to overlook the Lord's hand in it. But it is well with us when we look upon ourselves as one with Christ, as the people of the Lord whom he hath formed for himself; in whom, and for whom, he will be exalted, and out of whom he is to get an everlasting tribute of praise and glory both in earth and in heaven. We should look upon all things which we enjoy as the effects of God's everlasting love to us; and if we could take in by faith, enlightened by the Spirit, that whatsoever God does for us, and bestows upon us, he does it with all the love of his heart freely, and out of an hearty good will and liking to us, it would lift up our hearts to him, and we should greatly rejoice in him. If we more particularly consider the words before us, there will appear a beautiful gradation in them. *The living God giveth us—things, all things richly,—to enjoy.* All things he giveth unto us, for he giveth us himself, his Son, and his Spirit; so that every child of God may say as Jacob did to Esau, *I have enough*; or, as it is in the margin, *I have all things.* Having Christ, we have all things, for all blessings are contained in him; in whom the whole fulness of the Father's love, and all the immeasurable fulness of the Spirit's grace are contained.

The Lord's people have and enjoy what they have with the Lord's blessing. If they have health and wealth, they are blessings, as, through the Spirit, they are enabled to consecrate them to the Lord's service and praise. If they are under distress, enjoying God's supporting care, presence, and strength, makes up the want of all things unto them. If they are deprived of temporals, they are blessed with spiritual things; so that they find, upon casting up the sum total of their spiritual accounts, that all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth towards them. And, I may justly add, when believers view over their personal, family, national, and spiritual blessings, they have abundant cause to erect their *Ebenezer*, with wonder, gratitude, and praise, saying, *Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits.* This brings me,

Lastly, to observe how the Lord giveth us *richly* all things. God having loved his people with an everlasting love; and as he, out of his own heart's love chose their persons in Christ his Son before the world was; so he ordained the world for them, and appointed every state, case, and circumstance through which they should pass: and this, though a sovereign act, should not be resolved merely and entirely into absolute and supreme sovereignty, but should be considered as the good pleasure of his will, flowing from, and founded upon boundless love, and infinite wisdom, which shone forth in his eternal counsel respecting the glory of his grace, in the happiness and

salvation of his people. The Lord *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* He worketh all things, not merely after his will, but after the *counsel* of his will. There is no part of his will, but his counsel was concerned in it; and no part of his counsel, or what his infinite wisdom saw best, but his will resolved upon. He first loved the persons of his people, then chose them in Christ, and then appointed every thing which they should be exercised with in this life. He willed one should be poor, another rich, and this as subservient to promote his own glory, and the real good of his people. It is astonishing grace! God's glory and his people's good are wrapt up and involved together; what increases the one, makes for the happiness of the other. It would greatly tend to compose the mind, calm our affections, and produce settled resignation to the Lord's righteous dealings with us, to consider every one of them as a channel cut out, through which everlasting love is to be vented towards us, and by which we are to have fresh testimonies of it. His everlasting love, mercy, and grace, are at all times exercised by him towards his people. Their days of trouble, pain, temptations, and misery are with him. Their times of spiritual quickening, reviving, joy, and comfort, are in his hands. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.* The very hairs of their head are all numbered. What the Lord gives them is really good; he withholds from them no manner of thing that is good; and he bestows

good upon them, to the end that they may enjoy it, be happy in the enjoyment of it, and be disposed to bless and praise him for it. Sirs, we have a right to enjoy what God bestows upon us; he gives it for that end and purpose. His word declares it, and his truth confirms it. He says of his spiritual Israel, *Yea, I will rejoice over them to do, them good.* It is a matter of joy to the Lord God to do good unto his children, and he is pleased when they joy and rejoice in him and his benefits bestowed upon them. Hast thou health, wealth, and opportunity of doing good, of serving God in thy day and generation, and glorifying him in the world before men? Rejoice in it, and lay thyself out to the uttermost to thy Lord's praise. Art thou poor, and hast thou but little ability to serve and promote the cause of Christ? Rejoice, that though thou dost want an ability, yet thou dost not want a heart, and dost supply by thy prayers what is wanting in thee to answer other services and purposes. Learn to bless God who bestoweth upon you *all things richly to enjoy*; and pray for a spiritual enjoyment of God in all his gifts and graces. Thou mayest, in the absence of all creature good, say, thou hast all things, for Christ being thine, and his unsearchable riches thy portion, thou mayest say, *The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him.* O that the Eternal Spirit may lead us to see God in all our blessings, to enjoy him in all the mercies he daily bestows, and may we be influenced hereby to seek after constant communion with him at all times,

and in all his dispensations. What has been delivered agreeable to truth, suitable to your experience, and as far as calculated to promote your happiness and joy in him, may he command his blessing on; even so. *Amen.*