

A FEW REMARKS ON ADDRESSES TO SINNERS 1841.

It is often intimated that ministers, who are opposed to the exhortation-system, as maintained by Mr. F. do not preach to sinners. By such insinuations, it is not intended to say, that their auditories are constituted of innocent persons; therefore, it must be allowed that, either they do not preach at all, or that they preach to sinners: the former cannot be proved, therefore, the latter must be the fact, and the insinuation must be false. Christ is certainly preached by those censured ministers, as the suitable, the necessary, the only, and the all-sufficient Saviour. And while Christ is preached, though he be not offered on required terms, the hand of the Lord accompanies the preaching, and many are turned to the Lord. It was thus in the beginning, it is the same in our own times. How should it be otherwise, since God has chosen it shall be thus? The hand of the Lord determines the degree, as well as the reality, of the success.

Some have affirmed that, we have nothing to say to sinners; whereas we have nothing to say to any but sinners. We do not speak to the carnal of their ability, but, of their weakness; we rather declare what they cannot do, than what they can do: though with proper distinctions, we scruple not to say some things even on what they can do. For though they can do nothing spiritually acceptable to God, or that has any promise of salvation annexed to it; yet they can do many things useful to men, to good men, and to the cause of God; nor will such conduct be without some advantages to themselves: we do not, however, so speak of their inability, as to excuse them from the inflexible claims of God's holy law. Natural men are usually confident of their ability; we endeavour to beat down their towering notions on that head, by the demands of the law, and the provisions of the gospel. We do not find all natural men alike; some have a theoretic knowledge of the law and of the gospel: they really believe the

leading truths which we are commissioned to preach. Of these some are for reckoning themselves Christians indeed. We insist upon it, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is no true disciple of his. We plead, that spiritual faith and knowledge are accompanied with unfeigned humility and love; and that faith, without evangelical works is dead. Others of them disclaim all pretence to being true Christians. To such we aim to unreservedly shew the nothingness of all profession, if inwrought experience be wanting; and that a profession of the religion of Christ may be made, while the professors remain still under the claims of the law if love to Christ and his spiritual disciples be wanting, the chief evidence of the true Christian character is not there. Without love, said Paul, I am nothing.

We do not address sinners as though their eternal destiny were in their own hands, because we know it is in the hand of God. He keeps the book of life, and he is the only author of it; neither can any but himself reveal it. It is evident, that all who are not written therein, will be cast into the lake of fire. (* Rev. xx. 15) Their not being written therein, is not the cause of their being cast into hell: had there never been such a book with God, their doom would have been the same. To be written in heaven is an act of sovereign favour, and not of equity or justice. They who are written, are enrolled without any merit on their part; and they who are not written, are passed by without any fault of theirs being the cause of their preterition.) Their not being written leaves them under the claims of law, as pertaining to the equity of divine government; and the cause of their being cast into hell is their own wickedness, as is evident by the words of our Lord. (* Rev. xxi. 8.) They are fitted to destruction by their transgressions, before they are destroyed: (* Rom. ix. 22. Matt. x. 28.) Justice smites none but the guilty: punishment is neither an act of tyranny, nor of sovereignty, but of impartial justice. The causes of salvation being sovereignly withheld, leave men to perish in their own ways; but the sovereign suspension cannot be said to be the cause of their perishing; though, had it pleased the Eternal God to give, what he, without injustice, withheld, their destruction would have been prevented, in a manner, quite contrary to their own natural choice. Hence we observe, that the destiny of sinners is not in their own hands, as to whether they shall go to heaven or not, but is

fixed by God himself. The causes of salvation, and the causes of damnation, ought never to be blended, but should be carefully distinguished. The non-elect, when considered as having done no evil, were passed by; as well as the elect were written to life, when they were considered as having done no good. (* Rom. ix. 22. Matt. x. 28). We wish not to forget these awful truths in our ministry, and so not in our addresses to sinners. To speak against God, or to speak falsely for him, we ought to decline with solemn reverence.

It has also been said, that we seem to be afraid that some who are not elected should believe and be saved. This is not our fear, but we fear to speak erroneously, and to darken the pages of truth by anti-scriptural notions, even though the self-righteous and self-sufficient might be gratified by our so doing. We invite men to examine the scriptures, and caution them against infidel notions; not forgetting to apprize them of the certain wages of sin. We assure them, the ways of God are ever best, both for this life and that which is to come. It is our aim to carry the torch of holy truth before them, and to sentimentally enlighten their understandings, and induce them to consider their ways, and try their thoughts and actions, words and wishes, by the book of Almighty God. We endeavour to faithfully describe the righteous and the wicked, and to trace them into their separate states hereafter : ever insisting on the reasonable and scriptural fact, that their present lives and pursuits are not more really different and contrary, than their future condition will be awfully and endlessly so, as sure as God is merciful, faithful and just. In a word, on our system, the elect are sure to be saved; and on Mr. F.'s system, the non-elect are certainly lost. "I admit (says he) that the salvation of some men is impossible, it is certain that they will perish."(* Def. page 76). Great is the truth and must prevail. Amen.

FINIS.