

SERMONS

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Sermons by Samuel Worcester

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SAMUEL WORCESTER

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BY

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SERMON I.

LOVE OF REPUTATION.

JOHN V. 44. — HOW CAN YE BELIEVE WHO RECEIVE HONOR ONE OF ANOTHER, AND SEEK NOT THE HONOR WHICH IS FROM THE LORD ALONE ?

THE word which is here rendered "honor" is more commonly rendered *glory*. In the twelfth chapter of John it is rendered *praise*, where it is said of the rulers, that they did not confess the Lord, because they loved the *praise* of men more than the *praise* of God.

The natural man is not content with having others think of him and estimate him according to his true quality or just deserts ; but he constantly seeks to be reputed as wiser, better, and more useful than he is. He seeks such a kind of reputation as will best promote his selfish and worldly ends, and he calls that a good reputation. Many natural men wish to be thought truly religious men ; but they desire this reputation, only that it may aid them in accomplishing such selfish and worldly purposes as their hearts are devoted to. They seek to appear righteous to men, but not to be internally righteous ; and, if they were placed among persons who had no regard for

even external religion, they would have no love of being esteemed religious. Even when religious life is in some degree honorable, we see that natural men have an aversion to doing such things as would give them the reputation of being righteous: they seldom perform these things fully, but only enough to meet their own views of prudence; and this has not regard to what is approved by angels and the Lord, but to what is highly esteemed among men.

The angels look on the interior thoughts and affections of men, and not on their words and actions. The Lord looks on man's inmost love, and thence on the operations of his mind and body. When man's internal principles are good, he has glory, honor, or a good reputation with the Lord and the angels. Man is said to be praised, honored, or approved by the Lord, when he internally approves, honors, and loves what is of the Lord. When he receives, acknowledges, loves, and brings forth the Lord's good and truth, then he honors the Lord; and then also the Lord is said to give him honor, for he then does what the Lord loves to have him do, and approves of his doing.

He who seeks this honor of the Lord has respect to being a good man, rather than to being so esteemed. His attention is directed, not principally to what man looks upon, but to his internal principles, which the Lord regards. He seeks to have true thoughts and good loves, and to have these directed to what is spiritually and eternally useful. He is little solicitous merely to please any person on earth, even the most intimate friend; but his object

is to do what will be spiritually useful to others, or what they ought to be pleased with, and what they will be pleased with when they love good and truth. He seeks not honor from men, but seeks to do them good. And, if they honor him for his usefulness, he refers this honor wholly to the Lord; knowing and confessing, that the will and the power to do the good were of the Lord alone.

The text implies, that those who receive honor one of another cannot believe the divine truths. Why this is so, is the next object of inquiry.

The divine truths teach man to forsake all that he hath, that he may become the Lord's disciple. They teach him that he must have no temporal interests that shall be the primary motives of his conduct, but must seek first the kingdom of God and his justice. Thus they teach him, that he must have no connections and alliances with men which will obligate them to serve him, and him to serve them, except so far as such service will conduce to their spiritual welfare.

As the divine truths teach these things, they require a state of mind wholly incompatible with seeking honor one of another, — a state in which man will have respect to what is in itself right, and not what man may approve and applaud. And, therefore, he who looks outward to what men will commend, and acts for the sake of their approbation and favor, cannot be in a state to receive and believe the truths which teach him how to live a heavenly life.

That kind of belief in the divine truths which is meant in the text is a practical belief, — such a belief