

**THE REDEEMER'S TEARS WEPT
OVER LOST SOULS: AND TWO
DISCOURSES, ON SELF-
DEDICATION, AND ON YIELDING
OURSELVES TO GOD**

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The Redeemer's Tears Wept over Lost Souls: And Two Discourses, on Self-Dedication, and on Yielding Ourselves to God by John Howe & Robert Gordon

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JOHN HOWE & ROBERT GORDON

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THE
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TWO DISCOURSES,

ON SELF-DEDICATION, AND ON YIELDING OURSELVES TO GOD

BY THE

REV. JOHN HOWE, A.M.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY ROBERT GORDON, D.D.,

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

It can hardly have escaped the observation of any one who has read the Bible with attention, that in all the communications which the Almighty has been pleased to make to his rebellious subjects; he has employed language the best calculated to make its way to the heart and affections of mankind—that while his remonstrances with the impenitent present a lamentable picture of the most unreasonable hostility, and unprovoked aggression on their part, they bear testimony, at the same time, to the most compassionate forbearance on his—and that as often as he directly addresses the penitent and believing, whether it be in the way of reproof or of consolation, it is still in terms that breathe all the affectionate tenderness of a father's love. That such is the language of Scripture nobody can for a moment dispute, and that the design of such language is to remove those unworthy suspicions of the divine character, which go to array the feelings and affections of the human heart in hostility to its Maker, and perpetuate the enmity of the carnal mind against God, is equally obvious and incontrovertible. It

will readily be admitted, too, that if any thing approaching to such generosity and unmerited forbearance, could be manifested by one human being towards another, it could not fail to extort a universal tribute of admiration and respect, and that the common consent of mankind would pronounce that man to have reached the very last stage of moral insensibility, who could remain unaffected by such treatment on the part of one whom he had injured, or whose hostility that treatment would fail to disarm. And yet, is not such, in point of fact, the reception that the compassion of God has met with on the part of not a few of his offending creatures? Are there not multitudes who are conscious that they have never been deeply or permanently affected by all the tenderness of that commiseration which God has mingled with the very severest of his denunciations against the workers of iniquity—that if, at any time, their conscience is alarmed on contemplating the rigorous requirements, and inviolable sanctions of his law, as necessarily demanding a full and perfect satisfaction, they receive, at such a moment, with suspicion and distrust, the solemn declarations of his word, that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner—and that even when they succeed in suppressing that anxiety, and take refuge in those views of the divine mercy, which represent him as looking on sin with too indulgent an eye, ever to carry into effect against it the award of a righteous retribution, instead of feeling their heart captivated by such an idea of the divine goodness, they acknowledge it (if indeed they acknowledge it at all) with a heartlessness and

an indifference which they would be ashamed to offer in return for the slightest expressions of kindness and good-will on the part of a fellow creature? And what is the necessary inference that we are compelled to draw from such a fact? Is it not just virtually saying, that they attach no credit at all to any part of the divine testimony—that they are obstinately and systematically labouring to exclude any thing like a sober and serious conviction of its reality and truth—that the solemn declarations of Scripture, regarding the inevitable ruin which awaits an impenitent rebel against the holy and righteous government of God, have never produced any more permanent or salutary impressions on their minds, than if they were so many idle threats that are never seriously intended to be carried into execution—and that all the expressions of pity and compassion which the Almighty has condescended to employ, in urging upon them their infatuation and guilt, have affected their hearts just as little, as if there were no sincerity, and no meaning in such expressions? They must be conscious in fact, though they might not be very willing to acknowledge it, that they would be better pleased to be let altogether alone, and permitted to enjoy a state of undisturbed indifference regarding spiritual things, than to be assailed by any entreaty, however earnest, or any remonstrance, however tender—and that they feel towards the effusions of divine pity and commiseration, which the Scriptures pour out over the impenitence and unbelief of an ungodly world, very much as an alienated and disobedient child would feel towards the tears and entreaties

of an affectionate but virtuous father, who should seek to detach him from his profligate associates, and win him over from the paths of folly and of shame.

There is no difficulty then in accounting for the indifference with which one class of men peruse the language of compassion and pity, in which God has vouchsafed to address sinners in the Bible. That indifference is the consequence of their having no serious conviction of the reality of any such compassion on the part of God, as that language would seem to imply—and they doubt or question it, because they are unwilling to believe that the gospel method of extending mercy to sinners, is the only one that is consistent with the unalterable principles of the divine government. But there is reason to believe, even with respect to such as have felt the winning influence of the love of Christ, and who can testify, from what they have experienced, that nothing but this influence could ever have dislodged the spirit of aversion to God and holiness, which they once cherished, and which, in the days of their unbelief, gathered strength from the very representations of the divine character, which were intended to overthrow it, there is reason, we say, to believe, even with regard to such persons, that they do not always surrender themselves so unreservedly as they are both warranted and required to do, to those feelings of love, and gratitude, and confidence, which the affectionate tenderness of Scripture language, as addressed to them, is we conceive both fitted and intended to awaken. To the condescension of that

language, they cannot indeed be insensible, nor can they fail to draw consolation and encouragement from it, as often as they peruse it in the simplicity of faith, and with the firm persuasion that it promises nothing that will not be fulfilled far beyond what it is possible for them to conceive. But there are many, we are persuaded, who will be ready to acknowledge, that they have sometimes attached to such expressions of Scripture as we now allude to, a vagueness of meaning which has marred not a little the comfort that they might otherwise have derived from them—that they have felt as if it were an encroachment on the majesty and dignity of the divine character, to understand that language in any sense approaching to a literal interpretation—and that though they are persuaded it is the only language that could convey to the understanding a distinct idea of the compassion and mercy of God toward sinners, yet they have often regarded it as referring rather to the effects of the divine procedure, than to any thing corresponding to it as actually existing in the divine mind. Now it is certainly true, that it never was the design of revelation to lower the character of God in the conceptions of his intelligent creatures, and it would be a most impious perversion of the language of Scripture, to understand it in such a sense, as to invest the divine nature with any of the weaknesses of created and imperfect beings, or to ascribe to him those emotions and feelings that are inconsistent with unchangeable excellence and felicity, and which necessarily imply something painful and imperfect on the part of those