

SERMONS

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Sermons by Richard Price & Joseph Priestley

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RICHARD PRICE & JOSEPH PRIESTLEY

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BY

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SERMON I.
OF THE
SECURITY OF A VIRTUOUS COURSE.

PROVERBS X: 9.

HE THAT WALKETH UPRIGHTLY, WALKETH SURELY.

THESE words express one of the most important of all maxims. They tell us, that in the practice of virtue there is SAFETY. Much higher praise may be bestowed upon it. We may say that with it are connected peace, honour, dignity, the favour of God, happiness *now*, and ETERNAL happiness *hereafter*: and we have reason enough to think this true. But whether true or not, it is at least true, that there is safety in it.

Christianity informs us, that good men will be raised from death, to enjoy a glorious immortality, through that Saviour of the world, who tasted death for every man. But let the evidence for this be supposed precarious and unsatisfactory. Let it be reckoned uncertain, whether a virtuous course will terminate in such infinite blessings under the Divine government as Christians are taught to expect: still there will remain sufficient

evidence to prove, that in all events it must be the *safest*, and therefore our *wisest* course.

I cannot better employ the present time, than in endeavouring to explain and illustrate this truth. But previously to this, it will not be amiss to make a few observations on the character of the man who walks uprightly.

Uprightness signifies the same with integrity or sincerity. It implies a freedom from guile, and the faithful discharge of every known duty. An upright man allows himself in nothing that is inconsistent with truth and right. He complies with all the obligations he is under, and avoids every kind of prevarication and falsehood. He maintains an equal and uniform regard to the whole of righteousness. He hates alike all sin, and practises every part of virtue, from an unfeigned attachment to it established in his soul. This is what is most essential to the character of an upright man. He is governed by no sinister ends, or indirect views, in the discharge of his duty. It is not the love of fame, or the desire of private advantages, or mere natural temper, that produces his virtuous conduct; but an affection to virtue *as* virtue; a sense of the weight and excellence of the obligations of righteousness; and a zeal for the honour of God and the happiness of mankind. But to be a little more particular:—

Uprightness of character comprehends in it

right conduct with respect to God, and man, and ourselves. The person I am describing, is, first of all, upright in all his transactions with God. His religion is not a hypocritical show and ostentation. He *is* that which he *appears* to be to his fellow-creatures. His religious acts are emanations from a heart full of piety. He makes conscience of *private* as well as *public* devotion, and endeavours to walk blameless in all God's ordinances. He attends on religious services, not to be seen of men, but from a sense of duty and gratitude to his Maker; and instead of making them a cover for bad designs, or compensations for immorality, he makes them incentives to the discharge of all moral duties, and the means of rendering him more benevolent, amiable, and worthy.

Again. Uprightness implies faithfulness in all our transactions with *ourselves*. It is very common for men to impose upon themselves; to wink at offensive truths; and to practise unfair arts with their own minds. This is entirely inconsistent with the character of an upright man. He endeavours to be faithful to himself in all that he thinks and does, and to divest his mind of all unreasonable biasses. He is fair and honest in all his inquiries and deliberations, ready to own his mistakes, and thankful for every help to discover them. He wishes to know nothing but